



## 1. Qualitative Research Methods and Research Ethics

This course aims to impart a thorough understanding of qualitative research methodology and to help students to develop skills and competencies in the conduct of qualitative research. The module is delivered through a combination of lectures and workshops. Students will sometimes be asked to read one or more articles/chapters in preparation for a lecture or workshop and will be strongly encouraged to contribute to class discussions on various methodological issues, procedures and challenges.

While the lectures aim to cover a wide range of theoretical and methodological issues, the course is designed to equip students with the skills to carry out a qualitative research project and will cover the planning, data collection and analysis phases of the research process. Students will receive practical guidance on how to set up and manage a qualitative research project, collect data via individual in-depth interviews and other qualitative data collection methods, turn their data into meaningful findings, and write them up in a research report. Issues such as project planning and administration, sampling, access negotiation, analysis of interview data, and the writing up and presentation of qualitative data will be covered.



## 2. Quantitative Research Methods

This module consists of courses in Survey Design and Quantitative Data Analysis. Survey Design focuses on the use of surveys for the collection of quantitative data and includes an introduction to such issues as the formulation of testable hypotheses, questionnaire design, sampling, administrative procedures and the reporting of results. Quantitative Data Analysis covers the use of data from samples to statistically describe large populations and introduces the most widely used family of linear techniques used to model complex social phenomena. This module includes a full course in the use of the software SPSS. No prior knowledge of statistics or statistical software is required.



### 3. Research Design, Evaluation Research and Accessing Resources

#### Research Design

This section of the course provides students with an understanding of the importance of research design and its place in the research process. It introduces students to the main types of research designs and encourages them to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different designs. It also covers practical aspects of the research process such as negotiating access, the role of stakeholders, ethics and the preparation of research tenders and proposals.

#### Evaluation Research

The evaluation component provides an introduction to the theory and practice of evaluation. It equips students with the skills to analyse critically important issues in the design, conduct and use of evaluation in a social context. Students will be able to understand the purposes, contexts, competing theories and models of monitoring and evaluation including ethical, methodological and political issues in evaluation research. The module will impart practical skills to students so that they may develop the technical proficiency to undertake project/programme monitoring and evaluation.



#### Accessing Resources

The object of this course is to equip students with the skills to access relevant resources. Computerised resources, including bibliographical databases, citation indexes, electronic journals and the Internet (websites, search engines and portals) facilitate this task. Students will be trained in how to plan searches, including using Boolean operators and truncation symbols, and adding limits to searches, and how and where to access appropriate material from Irish and international sources. They will also be taught advanced use of the Internet, including customising search engines and using RSS feeds. Students' bibliographies in completed research projects should exhibit such skills.



## 4. Work Placement

The Work placement module carries 10 ECTS. Full-time students spend eight weeks on a work placement during the third semester (Trinity Term). Part-time students complete the work placement during the third semester of Year 2 and arrangements can be made for part-time students to complete the work placement over a shorter period of time. Students already in relevant employment can complete their work placement in that setting.

Exemptions from the work placement may be granted at the discretion of the Course Director in exceptional cases. Normally students are on work placement from mid-April to mid-June.

Students spend eight weeks on a work placement where they have the opportunity to apply their skills in a research environment. Students are offered placement opportunities within a range of the most reputable Irish research institutes and consultancies, government departments, semi-state agencies, as well as various trade and professional organisations. Students already in relevant employment can complete their work placement in that setting. Exemptions from the work placement may be granted at the discretion of the Course Director in exceptional cases.

## 5. Research Dissertation

The research dissertation is a major component of the degree of M.Sc. in Applied Social Research, comprising 40% of the overall grade with 30 ECTS, and is completed over the summer months (of Year 1 for full-time and Year 2 for part-time students). The dissertation should demonstrate that students have the ability to complete an applied research assignment from the initial stages of collecting primary data/accessing secondary data to the presentation of a final report. It should

include: a complete review of relevant research literature; a description of the research design and research methods used; presentation of research findings; and a discussion of the research findings with conclusions drawn. Quantitative data collected for the research should be analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. In the case of qualitative research, data should be analysed using the recommended coding and data management procedures. The dissertation is a maximum length of 20,000 words and is supervised by a member of the academic staff.

