RM2 ODL Qualitative Project Resources

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Overview

In this book, you will find the resources you need to complete the qualitative project for your Research Methods 2 course.

We will work through the book step-by-step, linking to relevant sections on Moodle. However, as the resources are made available from the start, you will also have some flexibility to work at a pace that suits you.

You will become familiar with the book in Semester 1, as we will ask you to look at certain sections to accompany the lecture content. However, the book will become most relevant in Semester 2, when you complete your larger assignments.

You will find links to each chapter at the left hand side of the page, and then there will be links to each heading within a chapter at the right hand side.

Part I

Assessment Information

1 Data Skills (Individual)

In this Chapter, we have included information about the Data Skills Assessments in RM2 (ANOVA and Regression). You can use the menu at the right hand side of this page to jump to the different sections.

1.1 General Information

- Deadlines for this assessment can be found under 'Deadlines' within the 'Course Information' section on the RM2 Moodle.
- In total this assessment is worth 10% of your final course grade. Each data skills worksheet is worth 5% and you will be awarded a mark out of 22.
- The submission links (and where appropriate, files) will be made available at least one week before the deadline.

1.2 Important information about R submissions (please read and watch the video!)

Please note the following for the R submissions:

- you must use the R markdown file provided. If you submit a file that you made yourself, the submission will automatically receive an H.
- you must not alter the R chunk itself (e.g. adding/removing backticks, removing or altering t0x etc.) in the R markdown file. If you do, you will automatically receive an H for that question and it may result in an H for the whole assessment.
- you must submit the completed .Rmd file. If you submit a blank .Rmd file, your submission will automatically receive an H.
- you must not alter the name of the object that the task is asking you to create

Please see this video for further details.

1.3 Type of Assessment/Structure

- You will be provided with an .Rmd file that you should complete and submit, like the homeworks you did in RM1. Some questions are dependent on each other, but most are independent.
- Both worksheets have 19 questions each. Some questions are worth 1 point and some are worth 2 points. You can see how much each task is worth on the worksheet.
- The points on each worksheet will total to 22.
- You will be presented with three types of questions: error mode, code writing and multiple choice
- For **error mode**, instead of asking you to write the code yourself, we're going to provide you with code that has errors in it. This code will either not run and it will produce an error message, or it will run, but it won't produce what it is supposed to. In both cases you have to fix the code to produce the intended output. The purpose of these tasks is to resolve errors and learn to debug, so please don't ask on Teams about the errors you get on the error mode tasks.
- For **code writing**, you will be given instructions on code that you should write. Provide the code that gives exactly the intended output (and only that). For some questions, you will be provided a data frame or a plot in the instructions file, and you will be asked to recreate that in the task. You should replace the NULL in the code chunk with your code.
- For **multiple choice**, you will be asked questions about the data or interpreting your statistical output. Please replace the NULL in the code chunk with the number of the option you think is correct. Please only use a single number, do not use words, and do not put the number in quotation marks.

1.4 Assessment Support

- Most of the tasks are based on code and functions you have seen in the data skills book
- Each worksheet has a couple of questions on things you may not have seen before. This is either to use a new function, or to combine functions in a new way. These tasks are there to test your generalisation skills with R functions.
- You can find instructions for how to complete the .Rmd files in the data skills book
- For the multiple choice questions about interpreting statistical output, you may also need to revise some of the key concepts from your lectures.
- Further information about feedback can be found in the Feedback Section of this chapter

1.5 How to do well in this Assessment

- Use the data skills activities to guide you.
- Read the question carefully and ensure that you provide exactly what is asked for (e.g., code or a single value), and only that.
- Follow the instructions for how to fill out the .Rmd file carefully making sure you do not change anything in the file you shouldn't.
- Ensure you are up to date with the R activities, as the data skills activities will assess your knowledge of these.
- Before you submit, make sure that your .Rmd file knits – if it does it means that what you have written is legal code (this is not to say that you will have written the correct code, it simply means you definitely haven't written any code that doesn't work).

1.6 Common Mistakes

- Changing the .Rmd file other than to provide answers and your GUID (e.g., deleting backticks, changing code chunk names, not using the file provided).
- Failure to follow instructions (e.g., writing code when a single value was requested).
- Including any illegal code in your .Rmd file, e.g., install.packages (you should never write code that would change something on someone else's machine, it causes issues and it's impolite!).
- Changing object names

1.7 How is the assessment related to the lectures for this course?

- The data skills submissions assess your ability to wrangle and visualise data in an open and reproducible way, as discussed in the lectures.
- Some tasks test your ability to interpret statistical test output.

1.8 Why am I being assessed like this?

- The worksheets assess your ability to wrangle and analyse data in a reproducible way. These are important skills for psychological researchers to develop.
- Your skills in data skills will progress throughout your degree and the worksheets ensure that you are maintaining a good rate of progress so that you are prepared for your dissertation.

1.9 How does this relate to previous work I have completed?

- The feedback from your RM1 data skills worksheets will be useful for these submissions.
- In addition, the guidance and solutions in the data skills book, posting on Teams and attending office hours will help you complete this assessment.

1.10 Academic intergrity

Please note that when submitting your work for assessment we accept it on the understanding that it is your own effort and work and unique to the set assignment.

To support you in understanding what plagiarism is and in avoiding it, please read the following resources that the University provides:

- SRC Advice and Support
- Code of Student Conduct and Plagiarism & Academic Integrity Code
- Avoiding plagiarism and engage in good academic practice (a Moodle course you can self-enrol in)
- Student support for AI, plagiarism and digital skills

In summary:

All work submitted by students for assessment is accepted on the understanding that it is the student's own effort. This means students' work should not contain:

- plagiarised content; or
- content that has been produced by another person, website, software or Artificial intelligence (AI) tool (except where AI use is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has been prepared jointly with any other person (except where this is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has already been submitted for assessment by the student at this or any other institution, known as self-plagiarism.

Statement on groupwork: We encourage students to form a study group and peer feedback groups. However, this assignment is not a group work assignment, so your work must be your own individual contribution. If you make a study group or a peer review group, avoid sharing final drafts or near final drafts of your work.

University statement on AI: The University of Glasgow recognises the value of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in academic and professional workplaces.The university has a responsibility to ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and other competencies associated within their discipline. The Student Learning Development service provides general guidance and support for students on the use of generative AI. Each item of assessment in your courses will have specific guidance about the use of AI. Where generative AI restrictions are in place, they have been carefully designed to maximise your learning opportunity whilst discouraging reliance on generative AI in a way that undermines your learning or development of good professional practice and graduate attributes.

Statement on use of generative AI: The current assessment is summative, meaning that it contributes to your course grade. **The purpose of this assessment is to develop and practice coding skills and data analysis. You can use AI as a learning assistant to explain code, to understand error messages and help documentation, and as a rubber duck to help articulate problems**. If you want to use translation software (i.e., code in another language first) be cautious as the syntax produced by generative AI is not always in keeping with the current coding language and can result in incorrect answers.

Avoid using AI to write your code as you risk not fully understanding the analysis and so you fail to build a foundation for future coding/analysis tasks. Avoid using AI to write comments for your code, as commenting helps you to articulate what you did and also helps you to understand the analysis and results more deeply.

There is no expectation that you will use generative AI, and we have no evidence that its use will confer an advantage for this assessment. If you do use generative AI, you MUST acknowledge use in-text via citations and referencing and in an appendix with a declaration of AI use as appropriate. If you choose to use it, we recommend that you use the Microsoft Edge Browser with Copilot and sign in with your university account using the multi-factor authentication to ensure that your work is private and secure. **Please keep a log of your use of AI as we may ask to see this.**

For this assignment, we will consider it a misuse of generative AI if you do not acknowledge using it. Declare all uses of AI, including initial exploration of the subject, literature searching, writing and editing, corrections for grammar and spelling, as well as any other tasks from the course. Be aware that AI may not represent the best response for this task, and you need to take responsibility for everything that is submitted.

1.11 Feedback

1.11.1 How is this assessment graded?

- Each worksheet will have 19 questions. Each question will be worth 1 or 2 points, with all questions adding up to 22 points for each worksheet.
- The computer-assisted marking code that we use checks that the objects in each code chunk are identical to the solution. It is therefore crucial that you follow the instructions carefully and do not change the names of the objects or the code chunks. These instructions are clearly stated in the submission files and you will lose marks if you provide the correct code but change the names.

1.11.2 How will the feedback from assessment help me in the future?

- This assessment will help you in any future work that requires working with quantitative data such as your dissertation project or future postgraduate courses.
- Additionally, R can be used for tasks such as conducting text analyses and building websites and therefore is an extremely useful transferable skill.

1.11.3 What feedback will I receive for this assessment?

- You will get a feedback sheet for each data skills worksheet that tells you your score for each question and the correct solution.
- There will be additional generic feedback provided for questions with common mistakes and to explain the answers if necessary beyond the solution.
- Finally, there will be individual feedback for any incorrect answers as necessary.

1.11.4 Who assessed my work?

- The worksheets will be graded using computer-assisted marking. In the first instance, the marking will be done automatically using R and then any incorrect answers will be checked manually.

1.11.5 Can I get more feedback?

- Yes! We encourage you discuss your assessment (regardless of the grade you received) with Wilhelmiina Toivo, who is in charge of marking this assessment.
- You can do so by attending her office hours, or contacting her directly to arrange an appointment if you cannot make the office hours.

1.11.6 What if I don't agree with my feedback or grade?

- Your first point of contact should be to arrange an additional feedback meeting with the course lead.
- Following this, if you still have concerns you should consult the guidance from the SRC which provides a clear explanation of the University appeals procedures. There are only three grounds for appeal:
  - Unfair or defective procedure
  - Failure to take into account medical or other adverse personal circumstances
  - There are relevant medical or other adverse personal circumstances which for good reason have not previously been presented.

You cannot appeal against academic judgement.

2 Multiple Choice Questions (Individual)

In this Chapter, we have included information about the Multiple Choice Quiz in RM2. You can use the menu at the right hand side of this page to jump to the different sections.

2.1 General Information

- The deadline for this assessment can be found under 'Deadlines' within the 'Course Information' section on the RM2 Moodle.
- This assessment is worth 10% of your final course grade.

Please note: The MCQ will open up one week before the deadline. Please ensure you have reviewed the Week 1-14 lecture content before taking the MCQ.

2.2 Type of Assessment/Structure

- All the information needed to answer the Multiple choice questions will have been covered in the research methods lectures between Weeks 1 and 14.
  - The MCQ will assess different types of content:
    * Knowledge of quantitative content covered in the lectures
    * Understanding of different quantitative research designs
    * Knowledge of qualitative content covered in the lectures
- The MCQ will be provided through a submission link on Moodle. The submission link will be made available one week before the deadline.
- There are 22 questions and each MCQ will have four options - the answer will be one of these.
- Each question will be presented on a single page. There are many reasons for this, including that having multiple questions on a page increases moodle loading times, slowing it down.

- You will have 40 minutes to complete the MCQ. If you are registered with disability services for extra time it should show longer than this. If the quiz does not display additional completion time when you click on the link, please contact Admin or Ashley/Wil to let them know.

2.3 Assessment Support

- All the information needed to answer the research methods questions will have been covered in the research methods lectures.
- The course leads provide practice questions for each of the lectures as well as a practice MCQ. You can find these in the 'Formative Activities' section on Moodle.
- Further information about feedback can be found in the Feedback section

2.4 How to do well in this assessment

- Read each question carefully.
- Ensure you are up to date on all lectures and have completed all the activities for each week.
- Ensure that you leave yourself enough time to complete the MCQ in a single sitting.
- Complete the essential reading for each lecture.
- Engage in opportunities to practice MCQ questions by completing the formative mini quizzes.

2.5 Common Mistakes

- Leaving the lecture content and reading to build up (i.e. not keeping up with it as you go along).
- Not reading the question carefully.
- Leaving some questions unanswered.

2.6 How is the assessment related to the lectures for this course?

- The MCQs test your understanding of statistical concepts and how to analyse and interpret data according to the methods presented in the lectures.
- The MCQs test your understanding of research designs in quantitative research.
- The MCQs also test your understanding of the qualitative content covered in the lectures.

2.7 Why am I being assessed like this?

- The MCQs assess your understanding of the course content, helping you to actively engage with the materials. These are important skills for psychological researchers to develop.
- Engaging with the material on the course will help build on the strong foundation of Research Methods developed thus far, helping to set you up for your dissertation.

2.8 How does this relate to previous work I have completed?

- Feedback from formative mini quizzes based on the lectures and essential reading will help you with this assignment

2.9 Academic integrity

Please note that when submitting your work for assessment we accept it on the understanding that it is your own effort and work and unique to the set assignment.

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- SRC Advice and Support
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In summary:

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- plagiarised content; or
- content that has been produced by another person, website, software or Artificial intelligence (AI) tool (except where AI use is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has been prepared jointly with any other person (except where this is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has already been submitted for assessment by the student at this or any other institution, known as self-plagiarism.

Statement on groupwork: We encourage students to form a study group and peer feedback groups. However, this assignment is not a group work assignment, so your work must be your own individual contribution. If you make a study group or a peer review group, avoid sharing final drafts or near final drafts of your work.

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Statement on use of generative AI: The current assessment is summative, meaning that it contributes to your course grade. **The purpose of this assessment is to provide an opportunity to test your understanding of the lecture content in the course. You can use AI as a learning assistant to help understand lecture content and to generate practice MCQs.** If you want to use translation software (i.e., you write the assignment in another language first) be cautious as the vocabulary and syntax produced by generative AI is not generally in keeping with the current language use and vocabulary in our field and can result in subtle misunderstanding in communication.

Avoid using AI to answer the questions because your understanding is a skill you need to develop.

There is no expectation that you will use generative AI, and we have no evidence that its use will confer an advantage for this assessment. If you do use generative AI, you MUST acknowledge use in-text via citations and referencing and in an appendix with a declaration of AI use as appropriate. If you choose to use it, we recommend that you use the Microsoft Edge Browser with Copilot and sign in with your university account using the multi-factor authentication to ensure that your work is private and secure. **Please keep a log of your use of AI as we may ask to see this.**

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2.10 Feedback

2.10.1 How is this assessment graded?

- The MCQ will consist of 22 questions, each with four response options. Each question is worth one point.
- The marking will be automatically computed on Moodle, and grades downloaded by staff.

2.10.2 How will feedback from this assessment help me in the future?

- This assessment will help you consolidate your knowledge of the statistical and qualitative content covered within the lecture materials. This will be useful in any future work that requires working with quantitative or qualitative data such as your dissertation project or future postgraduate courses.

2.10.3 What type of feedback will I receive for this assessment?

- After the marking has been completed, you will find out a) whether you answered each question correctly or not and b) what the correct answer was for each question

2.10.4 Who assessed my work?

- The worksheets will be graded using computer-assisted marking. The marking will be done automatically using Moodle.

3 Qualitative Portfolio (Group)

In this Chapter, we have included information about the Qualitative Portfolio in RM2. You can use the menu at the right hand side of this page to jump to the different sections.

3.1 General Information

- The deadline for this assessment can be found under 'Deadlines' within the 'Course Information' section on the RM2 Moodle.
- This is a group assessment, with each group typically consisting of around 4-6 students.
- The qualitative portfolio consists of three activities that should be completed and submitted in your groups.
- This assessment is worth 30% of your final course grade and will be a group mark.
- One member of your group should submit your portfolio to Moodle by the deadline.
- The submission link will open no later than 5 working days before the deadline and will be found in the Assignment Submission section of Moodle.

3.2 Word Count and Formatting

- The maximum word count for the qualitative portfolio is 1000 words. The word limit includes all written aspects, including any additional headings and in-text citations for Activities 1B, 2 and 3. However, it does not include the qualitative questions for Activity 1A and your reference list. There is no 10% rule, 1000 words is a strict upper limit.
- Please use the template provided for the portfolio.
- Your work should be presented in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-inch (2.54cm) margins.
- Your submission should be written and formatted according to APA 7th guidelines.

3.3 Type of Assessment/Structure

- This assessment will be a group and collaborative submission. Please note that there is a single mark for each submission, which will consist of three separate sections. All group members will receive the same mark for the submission. Sections will not, under any circumstances, be considered separately. Therefore it is vital that **all members of the group read and agree on the whole submission beforehand.**
- The portfolio will consist of a) developing questions for qualitative research, and reflecting on these, b) an ethics exercise, and c) identifying issues in a recording of a focus group.
- For this assessment, you will be required to:
  - follow the guidance for each of the three sections, ensuring that you complete the tasks as directed
  - reflect on the issues presented in the materials, considering how to mitigate them
  - link to the literature base and ethical guidelines, helping to support your points.

3.4 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Below, we have the ILOs for this assessment. Please note that some of the ILOs are overarching (i.e. apply to all three sections) whereas others are specifically for a single section. To increase clarity, we have stated which section/s apply for each ILO.

1. Quality of the Knowledge and Research
   - Develop six questions that would be likely to generate open discussion and rich responses from participants (#1: Qual questions)
   - Correctly identify ONE ethical issue, explain its importance, and provide guidance on how to mitigate it (#2: Ethics)
   - Correctly identify TWO or THREE issues present in the focus group, explain why they are problematic, and discuss possible improvements (#3: Focus group)
2. Quality of the Evaluation
   - As appropriate for each section, use academic evidence and/or reference to ethical guidelines to support your evaluation (#1: Qual questions, #2 Ethics, #3: Focus group)
   - As appropriate for each section, demonstrate understanding of the practical issues of running qualitative research through evaluation and reflection (#1: Qual questions, #2 Ethics, #3: Focus group)

- As appropriate for each section, synthesise academic evidence from multiple perspectives to demonstrate critical thinking and to support your position (#1 Qual questions, #2 Ethics, #3 Focus group)

3. Quality of the Academic Communication

   - Write clearly and succinctly with appropriate use of paragraphs, spelling and grammar, following APA 7th guidelines for all citations and references (#1: Qual questions, #2 Ethics, #3: Focus group)

Please note: In the first bullet point under ILO 2 (Quality of the Evaluation), we are not asking for you to relate to ethical guidelines for each section. We are asking you to link to academic evidence/ethical guidelines (as appropriate) for each of the three sections.

3.5 Assessment Support

- Guidance on how to complete the group portfolio will be provided as part of the course. These will be released on Moodle, but you will also be able to find all key resources in the Group Project Chapter.
- Further information about feedback can be found in the Feedback section
- Additional writing and study advice, including 1-to-1 guidance from Student Learning Development
- FAQs from previous students can be found in the FAQs Chapter

3.6 How to do well in this assessment

- Meet each of the intended learning outcomes - use these as a checklist for your work.
- Consult the guidelines provided closely, as these will provide key information about what is required in this assessment.
- Identify the key points in the literature that are relevant to each task, and relate them to your study.
- **Task 1: Qual questions** Develop qualitative questions that are open, clear, concise and appropriate. Take into account whether you are designing them for an interview, focus group or survey and use relevant evidence in your reflection.
- **Task 2 Ethics** Remember to link your identified ethics issue to the BPS code of Ethics.
- **Task 3: Focus Group** Make sure to use evidence to support your discussion on your chosen issues. Follow the guidelines on how many issues to discuss.

- Allow time to proof-read your work before submission.
- Work as a group and make sure everybody reads and agrees on the final submission.

3.7 Common Mistakes

- Developing questions that are closed, inappropriate, rambling or ask multiple different questions at once.
- Not linking to the evidence base in your written response.
- Not following the guidance provided for the assessment.
- Not following the guidance on how many ethical/focus group issues to discuss.
- Providing reflections that are shallow.
- Writing that is unclear and/or vague.
- Failure to adhere to the overall word limit.
- Not following the suggested word counts for each activity.
- Splitting sections among members of the group and not then considering the submission as a coherent whole. It is important to remember that all members should approve the full submission beforehand.

3.8 How is the assessment related to the lectures for this course?

- The qualitative portfolio allows you the opportunity to apply many of the concepts that you will learn about in more detail in the lectures.
- It will help give you insight to some of the practical issues related with conducting qualitative research, and considering how you might address these.

3.9 Why am I being assessed like this?

- Completing the qualitative portfolio is very important for a) better understanding how to conduct qualitative research practically, b) giving an understanding of the processes that underlie the data you will use for your qualitative report. These are key steps to your project, and help form a strong foundation.

- The qualitative portfolio is a group submission to reflect the fact that in most research, these decisions will be made as a team and it allows you to pool your collective knowledge to design the best study possible. Group work is an essential part of requirements for the British Psychological Society, and is a key part of this course.

3.10 How does this relate to previous work I have completed?

- You can gain informal feedback by posting on Teams, attending student office hours and attending the course leads Q&A session.
- Feedback on any previous written assignment will help with academic communication and using evidence to support your arguments.

Feedback on your Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports for RM1 will help you with how you link to the evidence base in your evaluation.

3.11 Academic integrity

Please note that when submitting your work for assessment we accept it on the understanding that it is your own effort and work and unique to the set assignment.

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- content that has been prepared jointly with any other person (except where this is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has already been submitted for assessment by the student at this or any other institution, known as self-plagiarism.

Statement on groupwork: This is a group assignment and one person from the group should be nominated to submit the final version of the assignment on Moodle. Your group's work should not be exactly the same as that of another group in the class, however, as you worked closely from common templates, we know that there may be some unavoidable similarities.

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Statement on use of generative AI: The current assessment is summative, meaning that it contributes to your course grade. **The purpose of this assessment is to provide an opportunity to develop your writing and communication. You can use AI as a learning assistant to help understand lecture content, to give feedback on your work, and to help in finding spelling and grammatical errors.** If you want to use translation software (i.e., you write the assignment in another language first) be cautious as the vocabulary and syntax produced by generative AI is not generally in keeping with the current language use and vocabulary in our field and can result in subtle misunderstanding in communication.

Avoid using AI to draft your assignment or structure your work, as these are specialist skills that you need to practice. Avoid using AI to make your citations or reference section, as there is a risk that it will fabricate information.

There is no expectation that you will use generative AI, and we have no evidence that its use will confer an advantage for this assessment. If you do use generative AI, you MUST acknowledge use in-text via citations and referencing and in an appendix with a declaration of AI use as appropriate. If you choose to use it, we recommend that you use the Microsoft Edge Browser with Copilot and sign in with your university account using the multi-factor authentication to ensure that your work is private and secure. **Please keep a log of your use of AI as we may ask to see this.**

For this assignment, we will consider it a misuse of generative AI if you do not acknowledge using it. Declare all uses of AI, including initial exploration of the subject, literature searching, writing and editing, corrections for grammar and spelling, as well as any other tasks from the course. Be aware that AI may not represent the best response for this task, and you need to take responsibility for everything that is submitted.

3.12 Feedback

3.12.1 What type of feedback will I receive for this assessment?

- You will receive written on-script comments, as well as three actionable feed-forward suggestions for work in the future (e.g. your qual report, your dissertation).
- You will also receive a rating on each of the expanded ILOs.

3.12.2 Can I get more feedback?

- If you would like to discuss your mark and feedback you should contact your marker, however, **we ask that you wait 24 hours after the release of the grades** before you do so to give you time to fully reflect on the feedback given.

You can arrange a meeting with your marker to clarify your grades and feedback but it can also be the case that you understand everything that was written and you just want a bit more feedback, or you'd like to chat about the essay generally. Please do make use of the opportunity to talk with your marker because it really does make a difference.

To help the discussion, when you e-mail your marker, you must complete the feedback reflection form which will ask you to consider the below:

- Confirm that you read the following feedback:
  - All on-script comments
  - Any feed-forward comments
  - The ratings on the ILOs
- Whether there was any feedback you did not understand or agree with.
- Whether you think your feedback aligned with your grade. If not, we ask for an explanation.
- Whether there is any aspect of your work you would like more feedback on.

3.12.3 How is this assessment graded?

- We use the Schedule A marking criteria, marking each assessment on a 22-point scale.
- We use the Intended Learning Outcomes presented above to mark this assessment.

3.12.4 How will feedback from this assessment help me in the future?

- Primarily, the feedback (and feedforward) obtained will support the write-up of your RM2 report. It will also be relevant for your dissertation in Year 3.
- Additionally, the feedback will help in any future research work you conduct that requires qualitative data collection, qualitative analysis, and evidence-based justification.

3.12.5 Who assessed my work?

- The first marker for this assessment will be a member of the RM2 staff team.
- Following University's policy, your assessment may be second marked by another member of the RM2 team. A range of work from across all markers will be second marked, to ensure that we are applying appropriate standards in assessment and that they are being applied consistently across the cohort of students being assessed.

3.12.6 What if I don't agree with my feedback or grade?

- Your first point of contact should be to arrange an additional feedback meeting with the marker of the report (the name will have been provided in your feedback). It is most likely to be either Ashley or Wil who will have marked this assessment. This meeting should be to gain additional feedback from the marker, rather than to contest the grade.
- Following this, if you still have concerns, you should consult the guidance from the SRC which provides a clear explanation of the University appeals procedures. There are only three grounds for appeal:
  - Unfair or Defective Procedure
  - Failure to take into account medical or other adverse personal circumstances
  - There are relevant medical or other adverse personal circumstances which for good reason have not previously been presented.

It is not possible to appeal against academic judgement.

4 Qualitative Report (Individual)

In this Chapter, we have included information about the Qualitative Report in RM2. You can use the menu at the right hand side of this page to jump to the different sections.

4.1 General Information

- The deadline for this assessment can be found under 'Deadlines' within the 'Course Information' section on the RM2 Moodle.
- There are different topics for this assessment, and you should choose ONE of these. These will be released by course leads at the beginning of Semester 2.
- This is an individual submission. We ask for the following documents to be submitted as **separate** documents:
  - the qualitative report (including references and appendices)
  - the step-by step analysis template
- This assessment is worth 50% of your final course grade.
- The submission link will open no later than 5 working days before the deadline and will be found in the Assignment Submission section of the RM2 Moodle.

4.2 Word Count and Formatting

- The maximum word count for the report is 3000 words. This includes all aspects of the report with the exception of the reference list and appendices. There is no 10% rule, 3000 words is a strict upper limit.
- Your work should be presented in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-inch (2.54cm) margins.
- All aspects of your report should be written and formatted according to APA guidelines.

4.3 Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Quality of the Knowledge and Research

    - Provide a comprehensive review of literature, which synthesises the main ideas and contextualises key issues.
    - Clearly justify the aims of the project
    - Clearly and correctly report the methods of the study

2. Quality of the Evaluation

    - Evaluate your role and positionality as a researcher in shaping the research process.
    - Clearly present themes and interpret them within a narrative. Ensure these are supported by verbatim evidence from the transcript.
    - Evaluate your study and how your results fit into the wider literature and social/psychological context.
    - Identify relevant methodological limitations, implications, and future directions in the context of previous research.

3. Quality of the Academic Communication

    - Write clearly and succinctly with appropriate use of paragraphs, spelling and grammar. Ensure that all parts of the report have a logical structure. Ensure that the report follows APA style consistently.
    - Clearly support ideas and statements with appropriate citations.
    - Clearly and transparently record the analytical process. Upload the separate submission evidencing the stages of your Thematic Analysis process.

4.4 Assessment Support

- Guidance on how to complete the qualitative report will be provided as part of the course. These will be released on Moodle, but you will also be able to find all key resources in the Qualitative Report Chapter.

- Further information about feedback can be found in the Feedback section

- Additional writing and study advice, including 1-to-1 guidance from Student Learning Development

- FAQs from previous students can be found in the FAQs Chapter

4.5 How to do well in this assessment

- Meet each of the intended learning outcomes - use these as a checklist for your work.
- Write clearly, concisely, with an academic tone and logical structure.
- Provide an evidence-based rationale for your research question(s), AND an evidence base for the use of qualitative methods.
- Narrow the focus of the literature review to a specific topic (for example, not a general review of all the literature on disabled people's experiences).
- Be clear about who the participants in your sample is and why this is relevant in relation to previous research.
- Engage with qualitative research! Read some of the articles in the reading list, or qualitative research in your topic of interest.
- Be ethical - do not share sensitive information or anything that might identify your participants. The quotes and transcript that you share must be appropriate for the audience (i.e. markers, examiners, fellow students).
- Keep the method section brief. Saying that, refer to materials (e.g. focus group schedules) that are placed in the appendices.
- In the analysis, focus on two main themes OR one main theme and two sub-themes. Describe each theme clearly and explain the themes using quotes as evidence.
- In the analysis the narrative goes beyond pure description and identifies underlying themes (e.g., contrasting different viewpoints, conflicting emotions, identity).
- Evaluation of findings in relation to previous research demonstrates a clear link between the introduction and discussion.
- Produce a professional document by proof reading the entire report.
- Provide a concise conclusion and an overall summary that covers each section of the report in the form of an abstract.
- Adhere to APA conventions for referencing and formatting.

4.6 Common Mistakes

- Vague or general statements as to why the project is utilising qualitative methods.
- Broad review of the topic area which lacks focus.
- Basing the rationale for the report upon personal opinion or “common knowledge” rather than peer-reviewed evidence.
- Missing detail and/or unnecessary detail in the method section.
- Fragmented analysis with no coherent narrative.
- Broad or overly descriptive analysis.
- A lack of evaluation of the literature in relation to the project findings, and/or a discussion of the limitations that is not supported by evidence.
- Evaluation of findings using quantitative, rather than qualitative, terminology (e.g., hypotheses validity, generalisation).
- Writing that contains grammatical errors, a lack of clarity, or an informal tone.
- Failure to adhere to the word limit.

4.7 How is the assessment related to the lectures for the course?

- The qualitative project assesses your ability to apply your knowledge of qualitative research methods from the lectures and using this in a practical context. This will allow you to develop skills in qualitative research design and analytical techniques.
- Depending on the exact topic you choose, the project may also be related to content from our lectures across the rest of the Conversion course.

4.8 Why am I being assessed like this?

- The assessment reflects the structure of a qualitative research article and is an example of the format used in this area to report qualitative research and is relevant dissertations using qualitative methods.
- The qualitative project will help you with future reports you write (whether they are qualitative or not), including your dissertation.

4.9 How does this relate to previous work I have completed?

- Research Methods 2 trains you to design, conduct and write up research reports. Although the use of qualitative research method in this assessment is new, you have already completed work that requires evidence-based writing, critical analysis, and clear and concise communication.
- You have already completed a report in RM1, and – although this was quantitative – it's similar in overall structure, and therefore the feedback received from this will help support this assessment.
- Feedback from the group portfolio assessment will also help you with the report in terms of evaluation, academic communication and writing skills.
- Feedback on any written assignment will help with academic communication.

4.10 Academic integrity

Please note that when submitting your work for assessment we accept it on the understanding that it is your own effort and work and unique to the set assignment.

To support you in understanding what plagiarism is and in avoiding it, please read the following resources that the University provides:

- SRC Advice and Support
- Code of Student Conduct and Plagiarism & Academic Integrity Code
- Avoiding plagiarism and engage in good academic practice (a Moodle course you can self-enrol in)
- Student support for AI, plagiarism and digital skills

In summary:

All work submitted by students for assessment is accepted on the understanding that it is the student's own effort. This means students' work should not contain:

- plagiarised content; or
- content that has been produced by another person, website, software or Artificial intelligence (AI) tool (except where AI use is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has been prepared jointly with any other person (except where this is explicitly permitted); or
- content that has already been submitted for assessment by the student at this or any other institution, known as self-plagiarism.

Statement on groupwork: This report is not a group work assignment, so your work must be your own individual contribution. However, as you worked closely in a small team and from common templates, we know that there may be some unavoidable similarities between team members in the methods and results, but it should never be identical or close to identical.

University statement on AI: The University of Glasgow recognises the value of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in academic and professional workplaces.The university has a responsibility to ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and other competencies associated within their discipline. The Student Learning Development service provides general guidance and support for students on the use of generative AI. Each item of assessment in your courses will have specific guidance about the use of AI. Where generative AI restrictions are in place, they have been carefully designed to maximise your learning opportunity whilst discouraging reliance on generative AI in a way that undermines your learning or development of good professional practice and graduate attributes.

Statement on use of generative AI: The current assessment is summative, meaning that it contributes to your course grade. **The purpose of this assessment is to provide an opportunity to complete a qualitative analysis and write it up as a research report. You can use AI as a learning assistant to help understand lecture content, to give feedback on your work, and to help in finding spelling and grammatical errors.** If you want to use translation software (i.e., you write the assignment in another language first) be cautious as the vocabulary and syntax produced by generative AI is not generally in keeping with the current language use and vocabulary in our field and can result in subtle misunderstanding in communication.

Avoid using AI to draft your assignment or structure your work, as these are specialist skills that you need to practice. Avoid using AI to make your citations or reference section, as there is a risk that it will fabricate information. Avoid using AI to do coding or generating themes in your qualitative analysis, for three reasons: 1) there are ethical issues as participants in the research datasets have not approved their data being loaded to GenAI, 2) the output generated tends to be of poor quality on its own, and 3) you need to practice these skills so you can develop them.

There is no expectation that you will use generative AI, and we have no evidence that its use will confer an advantage for this assessment. If you do use generative AI, you MUST acknowledge use in-text via citations and referencing and in an appendix with a declaration of AI use as appropriate. If you choose to use it, we recommend that you use the Microsoft Edge Browser with Copilot and sign in with your university account using the multi-factor authentication to ensure that your work is private and secure. **Please keep a log of your use of AI as we may ask to see this.**

For this assignment, we will consider it a misuse of generative AI if you do not acknowledge using it. Declare all uses of AI, including initial exploration of the subject, literature searching, writing and editing, corrections for grammar and spelling, as well as any other tasks from the course. Be aware that AI may not represent the best response for this task, and you need to take responsibility for everything that is submitted.

4.11 Feedback

4.11.1 What type of feedback will I receive for this assessment?

- You will receive written on-script comments, as well as three actionable feed-forward suggestions for your dissertation.
- You will also receive a rating on each of the expanded ILOs.

4.11.2 Can I get more feedback?

- If you would like to discuss your mark and feedback you should contact your marker, however, **we ask that you wait 24 hours after the release of the grades** before you do so to give you time to fully reflect on the feedback given.

You can arrange a meeting with your marker to clarify your grades and feedback but it can also be the case that you understand everything that was written and you just want a bit more feedback, or you'd like to chat about the essay generally. Please do make use of the opportunity to talk with your marker because it really does make a difference.

To help the discussion, when you e-mail your marker, you must complete the feedback reflection form which will ask you to consider the below:

- Confirm that you read the following feedback:
  - All on-script comments
  - Any feed-forward comments
  - The ratings on the ILOs
- Whether there was any feedback you did not understand or agree with.
- Whether you think your feedback aligned with your grade. If not, we ask for an explanation.
- Whether there is any aspect of your work you would like more feedback on.

4.11.3 How is this assessment graded?

- We use the Schedule A marking criteria, marking each assessment on a 22-point scale.
- We use the Intended Learning Outcomes presented above to mark this assessment.

4.11.4 How will feedback from this assessment help me in the future?

- Primarily, the feedback (and feedforward) obtained will support the write-up of your dissertation.
- Additionally, the feedback will help in any future research work you conduct that requires qualitative data collection, qualitative analysis, and evidence-based justification.

4.11.5 Who assessed my work?

- The first marker for this assessment will be a member of the RM2 staff team.
- Following University's policy, your assessment may be second marked by another member of the RM2 team. A range of work from across all markers will be second marked, to ensure that we are applying appropriate standards in assessment and that they are being applied consistently across the cohort of students being assessed.

4.11.6 What if I don't agree with my feedback or grade?

- Your first point of contact should be to arrange an additional feedback meeting with the marker of the report (the name will have been provided in your feedback). This meeting should be to gain additional feedback from the marker, rather than to contest the grade. If this does not bring a resolution, please reach out to the course lead/s in the first instance.
- Following this, if you still have concerns, you should consult the guidance from the SRC which provides a clear explanation of the University appeals procedures. There are only three grounds for appeal:
  - Unfair or Defective Procedure
  - Failure to take into account medical or other adverse personal circumstances
  - There are relevant medical or other adverse personal circumstances which for good reason have not previously been presented.

It is not possible to appeal against academic judgement.

Part II

Qualitative Project Information

5 Qualitative designs

In this chapter we are comparing and contrasting quantitative and qualitative designs to help you with the gear shift.

These are two very different ways to approach data collection and consequently, the type of data they yield is very different. It is important to recognise that not one method is "superior" or easier than the other - the paradigm you choose depends on the type of questions you want to answer.

Complete the activities below to familiarise yourself with the key differences between the two methodologies.

5.1 Activity 1: Differences between qualitative and quantitative designs

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers used as data	Words (written/spoken) and images used as data.
Seeks to identify relationships between variables to explain or predict with the aim of generalising findings to a wider population	Seeks to understand and interpret more local meanings. Recognises data as gathered in a context. *Sometimes* produces knowledge that contributes to more general understandings
Generates "shallow" but broad data: not a lot fo complex detail obtained from each participant but lots of participants take part to generate statistical power	Generates narrow but rich data - "thick descriptions" - detailed and complex accounts from each participant, not many participants
Seeks consensus, norms or general patterns, often aims to reduce diversity of responses to an average response	Tends to seek patterns but accommodates and explores difference and divergence within the data
Tends to be theory-testing and deductive	Tends to be theory generating and *inductive* (working up from the data)
Values detachment and impartiality (objectivity)	Values personal involvement and partiality (subjectivity, reflexivity)

Quantitative	Qualitative
Has a fixed method (harder to change focus when data collection has begun)	Method is less fixed (can accommodate a shift in focus in the same study)
Can be completed quickly	Tends to take longer to complete because it is interpretative and there is no formula

Look at the table above and write down answers for the following questions:

- What might a 'typical' quantitative study look like? What kind of data might be collected? What would be the aim of the study? What might your sample look like?
- What might a'typical' qualitative study look like? What kind of data might be collected? What would be the aim of the study? What might your sample look like?
- What type of research question might be best answered with a quantitative design?
- What type of research question might be best answered with a qualitative design?

5.2 Activity 2: Research designs quiz

Choose whether a quantitative or qualitative design is most appropriate for each of the following studies. Why did you choose each option?

1. Angela is conducting a study exploring the experiences of people currently experiencing mental ill health. She is interested in a) better understanding what people with mental ill health experience day-to-day, and b) exploring the support mechanisms that are in place

This study is more likely to be:

- (A) Qualitative
- (B) Quantitative

Explain the answer

This study would be best conducted as a qualitative study - the researcher is interested in exploring the experiences of people

2. John is conducting a study where he is measuring whether the amount of sleep that children get is related to their cognitive performance in class. He asks the children to wear a sleep tracker to bed, so he can see when they are sleeping and when they are awake.

This study is more likely to be:

- (A) Qualitative
- (B) Quantitative

Explain the answer

This study would best be conducted as a quantitative study - the data will be quantified in numbers

3. Sally is conducting a study where she is interested in the effects of violence on TV on children.

This study is more likely to be:

- (A) Qualitative
- (B) Quantitative

Explain the answer

On balance, we've chosen qualitative for this, but this study could be either quantitative or qualitative depending on how it's set up - if the researcher is interested in a causal relationship and measures the effects numerically, the study would be quantitative. However, if the researcher for example does interviews with parents and wants to find out their experiences and perceptions more in depth, the study could also be qualitative.

4. James is conducting a study where he wants to better understand motivations for smoking among teenagers.

This study is more likely to be:

- (A) Qualitative
- (B) Quantitative

Explain the answer

This study would probably best be conducted as a qualitative study - the researcher is looking at the motivations of the participants. However, it could also possibly be a quantitative study, if the motivations are measured and quantified on a numeric scale instead of text data.

5. Elaine is conducting a study exploring whether the amount of studying done in preparation for an exam predicts exam performance.

This study is more likely to be:

- (A) Qualitative
- (B) Quantitative

Explain the answer

This study would be quantitative - the researcher is interested in a causal relationship between the variables, which you cannot achieve with a qualitative design.

6 Qualitative questions

The purpose of this chapter is to get you thinking about how to formulate good questions for different qualitative research methods, and what things to avoid. Do the activities below on your own and then discuss your answers with your group.

6.1 Focus Groups

When you are conducting qualitative research, thinking about the questions you are going to ask your participants is really important to ensure your data will be rich and of good quality. You want to write questions that are clear, open-ended and prompt the participants to discuss/share their experiences. Here are ten tips for writing good focus group questions:

1. Ensure that the questions on your Focus Group Schedule are relevant and allow you to explore and possibly answer your research questions.
2. Remember you are not doing quantitative research! The beauty of qualitative research is that your participants can respond in a variety of ways and tell you all about their experiences. In order to allow them to do this, don't ask them questions, such as: Do people like A more than B? Does one thing cause another?
3. Make sure that your questions are open-ended, such as: What are your experiences of… , Can you think of a situation when…? This will keep conversation going. Don't ask questions that prompt a simple yes/no answer.
4. Don't write questions that are leading e.g. Do you agree that…. You are investigating something you don't know the answer to. Even if you think you might know the answer your questions should not reflect this.
5. Think about ethics! Are the questions you are asking people ethically problematic? If they are, it doesn't always mean you should not ask them, you just have to be more cautious when you do - it's important that we respect our participants and give them the opportunity to decide how much they are willing to share!
6. Think about time. The focus group is normally around 30-40 mins long. It takes quite a bit of time to get through a focus group schedule, especially if you have to ask additional questions. We would recommend you have 5 or maybe 6 questions/discussion points on your schedule.

7. It is useful to put a star next to/highlight the really important questions you want to ask. This means that if you do start to run out of time then you can miss some of the other questions and go straight to these questions.
8. Think about the order of the questions on the schedule. You want to create a discussion that is as natural as possible, and this means one question should follow from the next. If you structure the questions well at this point you may find that in the focus group you have to say very little in order to cover everything.
9. Have an opening question that makes people feel relaxed and gets them talking. Something that people can discuss easily and something they don't need to think about too much.
10. Additional prompts underneath the questions can be helpful for the person running the focus group, especially when you are new to qualitative research. See below for some examples from a study Ashley was involved with a few years ago. So, think of some probing questions that might allow people to discuss the question/topic in more detail. You might not have to use these, but they are there if you do!

6.2 Interviews

Many of the rules for good focus group questions also apply to interviews (e.g. writing open-ended questions that are not leading, having prompts ready etc.). However, in an interview, the researcher is typically one-on-one with a participant, which means that the discussion may in some cases be a bit less structured than a focus group schedule and may need to include more probes.

This is one section from a semi-structured interview schedule Ashley conducted, and is provided purely to give an example of how you might follow up your questions with prompts or probes. Please note that these were sensitive interviews that required NHS ethical approval, and therefore will likely be very different to any research you will be doing during the ODL course in terms of content/tone.

Questions about receiving anxiety interventions	PROBES
What help have you received for your anxiety?	What help did you receive in the past? Are you currently receiving help? Who helps/helped you?
Do you feel as if the help you received (or are receiving) has made any difference to your anxiety? It may have made a positive difference, a negative difference or no difference at all.	Anything else?
What was the best thing about the help you received for your anxiety?	How did it help? Anything else?

Questions about receiving anxiety interventions	PROBES
What was the worst thing about the help you received for your anxiety?	Can you expand on this? Anything else?
Some interventions will be adapted for the specific needs of the client. Did the help you received seem to be modified in any way? If so, what changes were made, in your opinion.	If there were changes, were they helpful? What helped the most? If any changes at all could have been made, what would your suggestions be?
If someone was to develop an intervention to help adults with ASD with their anxiety, what would help the most, in your opinion?	What would be the best type of intervention? What changes should be made? What information could you give that would help the person giving the intervention?

6.3 Qualitative surveys

Many of the principles discussed above also apply to qualitative survey questions - you want your questions to be clear, qualitative, and open-ended. However, due to the different response format and the fact that you are not there to clarify or provide prompts, there are some additional things to take into account when designing qualitative surveys. Here are some tips for writing good qualitative survey questions:

1. You don't get instant feedback from your participants the same way you do in focus groups or interviews - hence, it's really important to ensure your questions are clear before starting data collection. Pre-testing the questions with people who are not involved in the project is a good way to do this.
2. Clarity of the questions is particularly important - make sure there is no ambiguity and keep your questions short.
3. Avoid questions which have multiple parts (as participants may just pick up on one) - if your question has multiple parts, it might be better to split it into two
4. Think of the order of your questions - if you start with a broad, over-arching question, participants might only answer this question and write "see above" in others, which reduced the richness of your data
5. You can provide examples in brackets after the question that work as "prompts" and help the participant answer the question. However, be careful not to steer them too much

or assume what their answer will be. In a recent qualitative survey that Wil conducted, this was one of the questions: "What do you think language barriers in teaching are, and what are your experiences (and/or those of your colleagues) of them in teaching international students? (Here you may want to reflect on your experience of teaching, tutoring, supervising and interacting with international students.)"

6. Include a final open question that allows the participant to share anything they would like to add. For example: "Is there anything else you would like to add about … ?"

7. Don't include too many topic questions - this will reduce the quality of your data as participants will get tired and more likely to drop out (you may have some demographic questions which are shorter and that's fine).

6.4 Activities

6.4.1 Activity 1: Which of these questions would you change and why?

Have a look at these fictional focus group questions and write down which ones you would change and why.

Research question: How does students' sense of belonging relate to participation in team sports?

1. How many hours of group sport do you participate in each week?
2. What does being a part of a team mean to you?
3. What does belonging mean to you?
4. How has your sense of belonging improved since joining your sports team?
5. I am going to go around the group one-by-one and I want everybody to tell me about a time when they felt that they haven't belonged to a team, and how that impacted them personally?
6. Tell me on a scale from 1-5, how much do you feel like you belong to a sports team
7. Do you like being part of a sports team?

Suggested Answers

- **Question 1.** This question will result in a numeric answer that does not produce meaningful qualitative data. Be careful not to accidentally ask quantitative questions!
- **Question 2. and 3.** These two questions are open-ended and qualitative, and will likely provide rich answers. One thing to think about is what question to start with and where to include prompts - number 3 is quite big and vague, and participants may struggle to get started with this, especially if it's early on in the FG.
- **Question 4.** This is a leading question - it implies that their sense of belonging

has indeed *improved* when this may not be the case. A better way to phrase this would be: **"Has your sense of belonging changed since joining a team? If so, how? If not, why not?"**

- **Question 5.** This question puts participants on the spot, which is something you never want to do, especially with a sensitive question like this. Instead, the question should be given to the group, so participants can answer if they want to, and disclose as much or as little they wish to.
- **Question 6.** This is a quantitative question and does not provide meaningful qualitative data.
- **Question 7.** This is a yes/no-question. You should avoid phrasing questions like this, as they don't prompt rich answers. Instead, you may want to ask something like: **"What has been the best part about joining a team and why?** or **What aspects of being part of a team do you like? Why?** If you ask a yes/no-question, make sure to open it with some prompts (see example above for question 4).

6.5 Activity 2: Re-wording questions

Have a look at these poorly written fictional focus group questions. Try to re-write them to improve them for clarity and the quality of data they would give you.

Research question: Exploring international students' experiences of their sense of belonging and homesickness

1. Have you ever felt homesick while studying abroad?
2. How has this negatively affected you?
3. How often do you feel like you don't belong?
4. Does homesickness ever make you feel like you don't belong?
5. What do you do to feel better?

When you are happy with your own answers, go through the suggested answers below.

Suggested Answers

- Question 1: This question prompts a yes/no answer - a better way to phrase this would be: **"What have your experiences of homesickness been while studying abroad?"**
- Question 2: This question can be a bit sensitive - a better way to phrase this would be to say **"How do you think this has affected you?"** so the participant doesn't feel like they need to share a negative experience if they don't want to. Alternatively you could ask: **"What about this has been challenging to you**

and how have you managed that?"

- Question 3: This question doesn't produce meaningful qualitative data - if they answer "Mostly on weekends", you don't have much to analyse. A better way of phrasing the same idea it would be: **"How have your experiences of belongingness been?"**
- Question 4: This question also prompts a yes/no answer. This is not necessarily a very good question in the first place because you're not directly looking at a causal relationship the same way you would in a quantitative study, and it becomes easily a leading question assuming there is a relationship between the two. A better question would be: **"How do you think your experiences of belongingness and homesickness compare or connect to each other?"**
- Question 5: This question is a bit ambiguous and it's not really clear what you are asking - feel better about what? This also assumes that homesickness is always a negative state, which it might not be to the participants. A better way to phrase this would be: **"How do you like to manage your feelings of homesickness?"** or **"What do you do when you are feeling homesick?"**

6.6 OPTIONAL: Research skills session - Developing questions

Ashley has recorded **optional** research skills sessions on different aspects of qualitative research. These sessions take a little bit deeper dive into some of the topics and may be particularly useful if you are planning on doing a qualitative dissertation next year.

Watch the video here

6.6.1 Overall structure

It's important to think about the overall structure of an interview or focus group schedule. A good structure to use is: A warm up question, the main questions you want to ask, and an exit question. It is likely particularly important to use a warm up/ice breaker question for a focus group, especially if participants don't know each other particularly well.

Warm up Question

The aim is to allow participants to introduce themselves, ensure everyone understands the procedure, and to encourage people to feel comfortable talking. Previous projects have used photos, cartoons, and media, or asked participants to generate meanings of the terms used in the discussion (e.g., "poor sleep","well-being") to get people talking. *What is your idea for an ice breaker that might lead naturally into the main discussion?*

What makes a good/poor icebreaker?

Thinking about the points above: *What do you think of the following ice-breakers?*

- **A FG on lived experience during COVID-19 of international students:** What is your favourite meal from your home country?
- **A FG on coping strategies in students:** What do you think is the best way to reduce stress for students?
- **A FG on feelings of belonging in a work context:** What do you think about the graphic below? Does it resonate in any way?

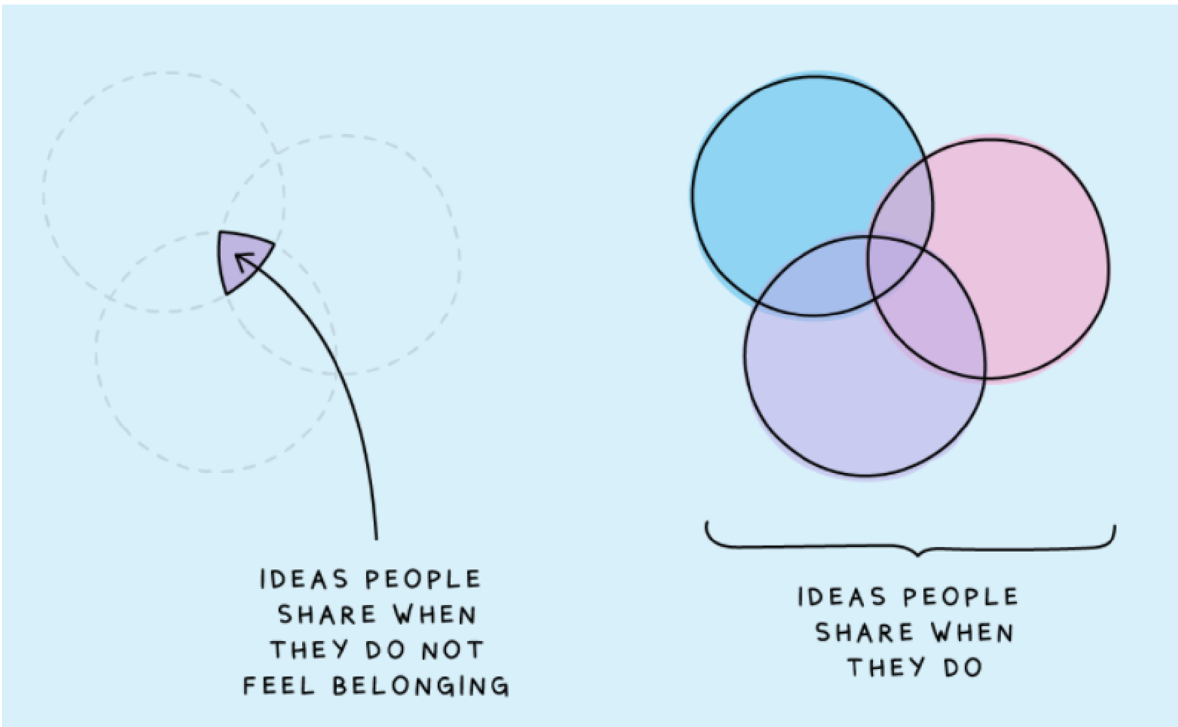


Figure 6.1: Belonging icebreaker

Main Questions

Bear in mind that the discussion may wander off track or focus on one aspect. Consider which part of the research question you think is most important to get people to answer. Start with this and be prepared to come back to it at the end if you need to. If you have more sensitive questions in your research schedule, they should be included later on, so people answer them when they are more comfortable.

What should the questions be like? Avoid asking questions that ask two or three things in one sentence (e.g., about behaviour and impact on mood). Break it down into simpler questions. Limit the number of direct questions that elicit yes/no answers. These can be useful to gather information but are less helpful in generating a discussion. Add in probes/prompts to elicit further information if required.

Try to:

1. Frame questions in an open way that will facilitate discussion (e.g. ‘do you use facebook?’ is closed (can be answered as yes/no) whereas ‘can you tell me about your experiences with social media?’ is a bit more open - you could then follow up with prompts to specifically ask about types if you want to get that information

2. Frame questions in a way that is not leading. For example, ‘how did lockdown negatively impact on your ability to study?’ assumes that it did, when this may not be the case. A better question would be ‘’Do you think that lockdown restrictions impacted on students’ experiences of studying? If so, how?”

3. If you have sensitive questions, try to frame questions in a way that is not personal (i.e. you give people a chance to answer related to themselves, but they can also choose not to). This apporach also invites people who may not have lived experience to respond, e.g. “How do you take care of yourself when you are anxious” would be better phrased as “How might students support themselves when they are feeling anxious?” This is more important for focus groups, as people might feel put on thespot and go beyond their comfort levels.

4. Not ask lots of different things within the one question, e.g. “Can you tell us about your experiences of studying in Semester 1, how it made you feel and how that affects your studying in Semester 2?” You could ask about experiences of studying generally, and then could follow up with specific sub-questions asking them about semester 1 and 2, if that is something that was important to you.

Closing question

The aim here is to give people an opportunity to add anything that might have been missed in the discussion/to wrap things up.

Examples:

- Thank you very much for all the great points you had today!Before we wrap things up, you have any final points that you would like to make, that perhaps wasn’t covered in the interview?
- Today we covered X, Y, and Z in the focus group. Is there anyone who has any final thoughts about what we covered here today that they’d like to share?
- That’s us finished with the main part of the focus group. We’d like to end by giving you all an opportunity to add anything that you think is important but has not been covered in the focus group so far. If you’d like to add something, please press raise hand on teams and we can make sure we go round those people before we finish up!

6.6.2 Braun & Clarke (2013) activity

Here, we have an adapted version of an interview schedule that is included in the Braun & Clarke (2013) book, on the topic of Partner Relationships. This is purposefully poor. What problems can you spot?

1. If you are not already married, are you planning to get married within the next few years?
2. I love going to the cinema with my partner, do you?
3. Do you have a good time with your partner?
4. Would you go to Relate if you had problems in your relationship?
5. When and how did you meet your partner?
6. Do you earn more money that your partner?

Show me the solution

In general Overall, the interview schedule lacks coherence – it covers a wide range of different topics, and it's not clear what the focus of the interview is. The ordering of the questions is also very poor (very sensitive questions early in the interview; moving straight from questions about positive aspects of the relationship to relationship difficulties). The researchers should decide on the focus of their research, and their research question, and design the interview schedule with these in mind. The schedule should also be reordered so it starts with less sensitive questions (these should be moved to later in the interview) and the questions flow logically. The interview should also end with a general 'clean-up' question (e.g., 'Is there anything else you would like to add?'). (NB. Our answers to this exercise assume that the research is being conducted in Britain)
Question 1
Problems First, this is a closed question which does not encourage participants to provide rich and detailed answers. Second, unless the researcher already has quite a bit of information about the participant, it is not an ideal opening interview question because it makes a number of problematic and potentially alienating assumptions, which may damage rapport. For example, unless the study is specifically focused on heterosexual couples ('partner relationships' suggests a inclusive focus), or the researcher already knows how the participants identify their sexuality, assuming that people are married, or asking whether they are planning to marry, when marriage is not legally available to same-sex couples, reinforces heteronormativity. Furthermore, unless the research is specifically focused on marriage, asking whether people are 'planning to get married' assumes a particular model of relationships whereby marriage (and civil partnership) is treated as the 'gold standard' of relationships, the ideal end-point of a couple's relational journey, and not everyone views marriage in this way (some couples are critical of marriage and choose actively not to get married).
Solutions The question needs to be reworded so that it is inclusive of same-sex and heterosexual relationships and does not 'buy into' assumptions about marriage as gold

standard of relationships. The question should also be reworded as an open question and probably moved to later in the interview.

Question 2

Problems Again, a closed question and extremely leading – it invites the participant to agree with the researcher's preferences! This is not the best way of accessing participants' perspectives.

Solutions Reword the question so that it is open and not leading (do not use the researcher's preferences in this way).

Question 3

Problems Again closed, and rather vague (what constitutes a 'good time'?).

Solutions Reword the question so that it is open and more concrete.

Question 4

Problems Again closed, and assumes that the participants know what Relate is (a UK charity that that offers relationship counselling and sex therapy to heterosexual and same-sex couples experiencing relationship difficulties). Making assumptions about what the participants know (and don't know) can alienate participants (making them feel stupid for not knowing) and damage rapport. Moreover, Relate is not the only provider of relationship counselling in the UK.

Solutions Replace this with an open question and one that does not make assumptions about the participants' knowledge (e.g., 'relationship counselling' is a good substitute for Relate).

Question 5

Problems Again, a double-barrelled question and also one that would work better earlier in the interview.

Solutions Reword the question to remove the double-barrelled element (decide what is more important to know when [how long ago] they met their partner or how they met them?). This would work better as the opening interview question (it makes little sense to ask questions 1-6 before asking this question) because it is a relatively 'gentle' question and possibly one that participants would be expecting to answer in an interview on partner relationships. It provides participants with an opportunity to 'tell the story' of their current relationship at the start of the interview.

Question 6

Problems Again a closed question and also a very sensitive one!

Solutions Again, this needs to be replaced with a more open question that invites detailed responses. The researcher should reflect on what they want to know and how this question relates to their research question.

6.6.3 Further things to consider with qualitative surveys

1. No opportunity for clarity, so wording has to be clear

2. Similar points to above in terms of not asking too many different things, having a sensible structure
3. No rapport, unlikely to be an ‘ice breaker’ (although might have an intro question)
4. People might be more comfortable answering sensitive questions as they can be anonymous
5. Try not to have lots of questions as your participants will likely lose patience - what are the key things you want to know?
6. Can use branching e.g. in Qualtrics

7 Data collection

This chapter runs through some of the practical issues you need to think about when collecting data for a qualitative study. Do the activities below on your own and then discuss your answers with your group.

7.1 Considering ethics

Informed consent

Before and data collection takes place, you must provide your participants with an information sheet and consent form. You can find more information about this in the Ethics, Rigour and Reflexivity chapter

You must give everyone participating the Information sheet and consent form before the focus group/interview takes place. Completed consent forms should be returned to the researcher and you should verbally confirm consent before you start any data collection. In a survey, participants should complete consent form before seeing any survey questions.

Confidentiality in Focus groups

Remember that everyone (both those participating and running) the focus group have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the discussion.

Discuss some 'ground rules' at the start with the group, and also go through the Information Sheet and consent form at the start, to ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities. You may also want to include an ice breaker to make your participants feel more comfortable.

7.2 Focus group structure

There are a number of stages to a focus group, and it's not always exactly the same, but here is an example structure for a focus group:

- **Stage 1: Setting the scene.** The topic of the project should be introduced by the facilitator, and everyone agrees to take part. It must be made clear to the people in your focus group a) that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable with, b) highlight that the session will be recorded (if conducting your study online, also make sure to let your participants know they have a choice to have their camera on or off, but that the mic must be used), c) what will happen with the recordings (i.e. that they will be kept safe on University-approved servers and the transcript anonymised), d) that everyone has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the topics discussed in the group and e) that they are free to leave the session at any time. Run through the Information Sheet and Consent Form here, and discuss any ground rules you have. I would also raise the point here that there are a few questions to get through, and therefore you might have to step in to help manage time.
- **Stage 2: Recording.** Remember to start recording and let your participants know when you do it. This is very important.
- **Stage 3: Introductions.** Go around the table and ask everyone to introduce themselves. Start with yourself and the note-taker first. Everyone should state their first name clearly.
- **Stage 4: Ice-breaker.** Ask a warm-up question or ice-breaker. The aim is to allow participants to introduce themselves, ensure everyone understands the procedure, and to encourage people to feel comfortable talking. Previous projects have used photos, cartoons, and media, or asked participants to generate meanings of the terms used in the discussion (e.g., “poor sleep”,”well-being”) to get people talking.
- **Stage 5: Discussion.** This is where you ask your main questions, and follow-up questions. It is a good idea to prepare around five or six main questions, and perhaps highlight three or four that are most important to focus on. The discussion may follow a different order to that on the focus group schedule - this is fine.
- **Stage 6: Facilitating the discussion.** The facilitator should be prepared to help steer conversation back on track, and balance discussion so that everyone gets a chance to contribute. Have a few specific prompts that relate to each question and/or some general prompts to keep the discussion flowing. What are you going to do if no-one participates? Or if one person is contributing? For example… “has anyone else had a similar experience? Does anyone have a different view?” At the same time be ethical and avoid targeting individual people. Give participants the opportunity to describe their interpretations and take ownership. E.g., “How would…make you feel”, “Have you ever noticed that…” “Think back to when…”, “What was most important to you about…?”
- **Stage 7: Ending the discussion.** It’s good to end the discussion by going round the group and asking each participant if they have anything they want to add to the discussion/sum up their thoughts on what was discussed.Remember to allow focus group members the chance to confirm/withdraw consent for their anonymised contributions to be used.

7.3 Facilitation and note-taking

Facilitation/moderation

The facilitator (sometimes also known as the moderator) will be the person taking the lead during the focus group. They will be the one asking the questions of the participants, and the one facilitating the discussion. As you are aiming to mimic a naturalistic conversation, you have to build rapport. Ensure you allow everyone time to introduce themselves, and contribute to the ice-breaking phase by saying a bit about yourself.

A good facilitator shares the perspective of the people they are talking to throughout the focus group. The moderator should not be listening out for good quotes and should not be thinking about what to analyse. The role of the facilitator is to listen to the participants, and understand their points of view.

Note-taking

It is a good idea to have a note-taker there. Hopefully there will be no IT issues that mean that the recording doesn't work! Therefore, the note-taker should remind the facilitator about recording if required, and note down any impressions/initial thoughts around themes/good quotes. Also, you could note down how well the questions worked - were there any that participants didn't understand? It should be clear from the recording who is contributing when; it is useful to note down here and there who is speaking at various points, to ensure it matches up later on.

7.4 Facilitating focus groups: How to manage the group?

Focus groups are designed to be an informal discussion in a moderated setting. This allows for the data collection to be flexible and occur in a collective, more natural way - however, moderating a discussion in a group setting can also be challenging. Below we have some top tips for how to manage focus groups.

1. Make sure your participants are comfortable: establish ground rules and expectations at the start, ensure that you are interested in their perceptions and experiences and that there are no right or wrong answers, start with an ice-breaker to warm your participants up and make sure nobody is put on the spot and participants don't feel pressured to answer anything they do not wish to answer.

2. Manage the conversation effectively: make sure all participants have the opportunity to contribute if they wish and one participant doesn't dominate the whole conversation, ensure that conversation doesn't stray off topic or get stuck on one topic for too long. Give prompts if the participants struggle to get started on a question.

3. Stay neutral and *listen*: be careful not to provide your own opinion or views (this is surprisingly easy to do accidentally!) - this is about your participants and their experiences. Focus on listening to the participants and clarifying/prompting further if needed, give your participants time to gather their thoughts (learn to be comfortable with silent moments and don't fill them in with your opinions).

View below some situations you may encounter when running a focus group: before checking the answer, have a think how you would manage these scenarios and discuss the answers with your group.

1. One/some participants are very quiet and one participant dominates the conversation

Suggested Solutions

- The ice-breaker/easy opening questions are perhaps most important for quieter members of the group, to help make them feel more comfortable.
  - If you are running the focus group online, it might be a good idea to use the Raise hand feature - this would allow quieter members to show that they want to contribute, but without trying to gauge when to jump in the conversation. You can then take points in order of when they raised their hands.
  - If some people have contributed to part of the discussion and others haven't, open it up to the rest by asking if anyone who hasn't responded yet has anything to add. However, don't put people on the spot by asking them directly.
  - Make sure to distribute turns equally

2. The discussion is stuck on one topic

Suggested Solutions

- Remind the members of the group that there are a number of different questions to explore, and that you are mindful of time, so it might be best to leave that topic for now, and you can return if there's time at the end.

3. The discussion goes off topic

Suggested Solutions

- The facilitator has to be mindful of this and be ready to steer the conversation back on topic if needed.
- Remind the members of the group that there are a number of different questions to explore, and that you are mindful of time.
- Gently remind participants of the question that was asked. If running the FG

online, you may wish to put your questions on the chat or present them with screen sharing so the participants can see the question.

4. Participants are not comfortable answering the questions in the language the focus group is conducted in

Suggested Solutions

- Send questions in advance to your participants so they can prepare
- Consider if the FG could be conducted in a different language (however, be mindful that this creates additional work with transcription and translations and requires the facilitator to be fluent in the language)
- Give participants time to think and answer, and focus on making everybody feel comfortable at the start of the FG.

5. One participant looks uncomfortable and does not contribute

Suggested Solutions

- Try to create opportunities for everybody to speak, but remember that you should not point fingers at individual participants
- You cannot force anybody to speak, and sometimes participants might feel uneasy.
- Remember that they don't need to answer any of the questions if they don't want to - it is unethical to force your participants to answer.

6. Nobody answers the question you asked

Suggested Solutions

- Remember that this is the first time the participants may see the question, and they may need time to gather their thoughts
- Consider sending questions to your participants in advance so they know what to expect.
- Don't be uncomfortable with a bit of awkward silence (particularly if running your FG online) and don't fill the space with your opinions - let the participants take the lead.
- Prepare prompts/probes that you can ask to help the participants get started.
- You can ask if anybody would like to go first (don't put an individual participant on the spot)

7. You are not sure what the participant meant/the participant answers very shortly

Suggested Solutions

- You can ask if the participant would like to clarify the aspect of the answer you are not sure about.
- You can ask the participant to elaborate further (they may not want to, which is fine!). If you do this, make sure that you are specific about what you want them to elaborate on (for example, "that's really interesting, would you want to tell me a little bit more about why you think XXX?)
- If the participant does not know how to elaborate, you can ask if anybody else wants to add anything. Sometimes this will prompt the participant to build on their answer as a response to what the other participants are saying.

7.5 Facilitating interviews

Interviews are very different to focus groups, as the data collection is typically set up in a one-on-one situation. This means the types of questions you should ask, the types of answer you are likely to get, and the practical issues are quite different to focus groups. Here are some top tips for how to conduct an interview.

- Make an effort to develop rapport and make the participant feel comfortable.
- If you are doing a sensitive topic, pay attention to how your participant is presenting and ask them if they need a break or if they would like to continue.
- Focus on the person rather than taking notes - are you giving them encouragement to keep speaking (e.g. nods etc.)?
- If doing a semi-structured interview, pay attention to whether the participant brings something up that could/should be followed up with an addional question
- Not all interviews will be the same length - some people are very concise in how they answer whereas others talk a lot more so the overall interview length will vary
- Try to end on a positive question if you can - it can help to lift the mood for the participant and leave them in a good place

7.6 GDPR-compliance and data management

GDPR: general data protection regulation. It is the most up to date data protection law and your data collection and storage must comply to the GDPR principles.

See the University guidelines on:

- handling confidential data

- GDPR

Make sure that:

- You have a data management plan in place before data collection (how and where are you storing the data, who will have access to it, how long do you need to store it for, what steps of confidentiality and anonymisation are you taking?)
- Participants are made aware of your data management plan prior to any data collection in the information sheet and consent form
- Data should be retained until after completion of the project on a password-protected encrypted drive and a secure database accessible only to the research team
- Only use University-approved systems to collect, manage and store data - **do not use external providers (such as Google or Dropbox)**, as they may not be GDPR compliant
- If you share the data, your participants should be informed about this prior to taking part, and you should only share the anonymised data files
- **Do not share data via social media, Google drive or personal email which is not secure.**

7.7 OPTIONAL: Research skill session - data collection

Ashley has recorded **optional** research skills sessions on different aspects of qualitative research. These sessions take a little bit deeper dive into some of the topics and may be particularly useful if you are planning on doing a qualitative dissertation next year.

Watch the video here

7.7.1 General tips

- Be organised - get ethics in early etc., keep track of potential participants
- Think through all the different steps involved as you will need to refer to this in your ethics application - how do you plan to recruit, collect the data, store the data? Before you start collecting data, it would be good to have a checklist with everything you need to consider
- Only collect the demographics that you need - if you don't need to know how many siblings they have or what time they go to bed, then don't ask for that information
- Be sensitive to who your participants are - you might ask different questions in a focus group (where people are in front of others) than you would in an online questionnaire (where it is easier to withdraw if uncomfortable).
- Think about how you keep that data safe/anonymous
- Know in advance how many participants you need
- Know how you plan to analyse the data

- Consider what you can do to make the experience as comfortable as possible for participants (e.g. sending out questions in advance is particularly helpful for neurodivergent people/people who do not speak English as a first language).
- For interviews and focus groups - reassert consent before you start & always remember to press record! Also it's normal to feel a bt nervous - try to enjoy the process!
- For all, pilot the questions you ask - make sure that people take from them what you think
- When recruiting, think about who your target group is and it's good to justify why you are looking for a particular demographic. For example, do you definitely require someone to have a particular diagnosis?

7.7.2 Practicalities of running focus groups

- Establish ground rules - esp. confidentiality
- Set expectations - ask participants to respond to each other rather than each person individually responding to the question (if possible, this is not always the case)
- Moderator has to manage the group as best they can
- Wrapping things up.
- Can be helpful to have a notetaker to note down anything interesting/if doing it in person, to note down order that people speak in. Allows the moderator to focus on discussion

Tricky situations

- How do you develop rapport/make people feel more comfortable?
- How do you manage tricky dynamics within a group?
- What if no-one speaks/one person dominates?
- What if people go off topic?
- How to keep people to time?
- Giving everyone who wants it an opportunity to speak - if online could ask people to raise their hand

7.7.3 Practicalities of running interviews

Some of the things that we discussed in focus groups are relevant here, but specifically when thinking about interviews:

- Try to develop rapport and make the participant feel comfortable
- Try to focus on the person rather than taking notes - are you giving them encouragement to keep speaking (e.g. nods etc.)?
- If doing a semi-structured interview, try to notice if the participant brings something up that could/should be followed up with an additional question

- It's usual for some interviews to be shorter than others - some people are very concise in how they answer whereas others talk a lot more (and this may be on topic or not)
- Be aware of how someone is presenting - this is less relevant for coursework and more for future projects - if you are doing quite a sensitive topic, it's good practice to reassert consent and to ask people if they need a break for a little while/if they are okay to continue.
- Try to end on a positive question if you can - it can help to lift the mood for the participant and leave them in a good place

7.7.4 Practicalities of running qualitative surveys

- Think about whether there would be any possibility for the questions to be misinterpreted - you won't have a chance to correct people if they interpret something wrong (this is where doing a pilot can be useful)
- Try not to have too many questions - what are the key things you want to know? People will be less likely to respond with long, in depth answers if there are a lot of questions to answer.
- It might be good to give an indication of how many questions they have to go through.
- Easier to keep data anonymous than it is with other forms of data collection above - however still be sensitive to locations, names, personal experiences as these will have to be anonymised.

8 Data analysis

This chapter has activities to support you with Thematic Analysis. This chapter, alongside with Ashley's lectures, will talk you through the six phases required for TA; we advise using Braun & Clarke (2021) to structure your data analysis. This can be accessed through the library.

Overview of the steps of TA

1. Familiarisation (p.42 in the Braun & Clarke (2021) book)
2. Doing coding (p.59)
3. Generating initial themes (p.78)
4. Developing and Reviewing themes (p.97)
5. Refining, Defining and Naming themes (p.108)
6. Writing up your analysis (p.118)

8.1 Coding (Phases 1-2)

Here, we'll focus on Phases 1 and 2 of the process. Familiarisation starts on p.42 and Coding starts on p.59 of the Braun & Clarke (2021) book. We also covered how to do Phases 1 and 2 of the analysis in the Thematic Analysis lecture in Semester 1.

8.1.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation (p.42)

- Transcribing (or correcting/anonymising your transcript) helps you to become more familiar with your data. Although you will not do this in this project, you may do so in your dissertation).
- Read over the transcript, but do it in an 'active' way. This means reading while searching for meanings and patterns
- Note down anything of interest that comes up, either in a particular part of a transcript or thinking about the overall dataset

Practical Steps

Read through your transcript and take notes and/or make comments in the margins. Generate a list of ideas: what is interesting about the discussion? Are there any contradictions that you spot? What patterns do you observe?

8.1.2 Phase 2: Generating initial codes (p.59)

- Codes identify a feature of the data that seems interesting
- The process of coding involves going through the transcript and thinking about the data, and picking out what seems interesting/important.
- Try to apply short, specific, labels to each part of the transcript as you go through it.
- Coded data is specific (themes, which come later, are broad) -you will likely end up with quite a lot of different codes.
- Code for as many patterns as you can at this point - it won't all make it to the next stage, but it's good if you pick up as much as you can at this stage.

Practical Steps

Insert labels beside quotes - what is interesting about the quote? What does it tell us in relation to your research question?

8.1.3 How to actually do the coding (logistically)?

There are many different ways to approach this. We ask you to use one of two methods for your report (hand-coding or coding using Word). The reasons for this are that we need you to evidence the full process of your analysis, and this is included as part of the learning criteria for this assignment.

Option 1: Hand-coding

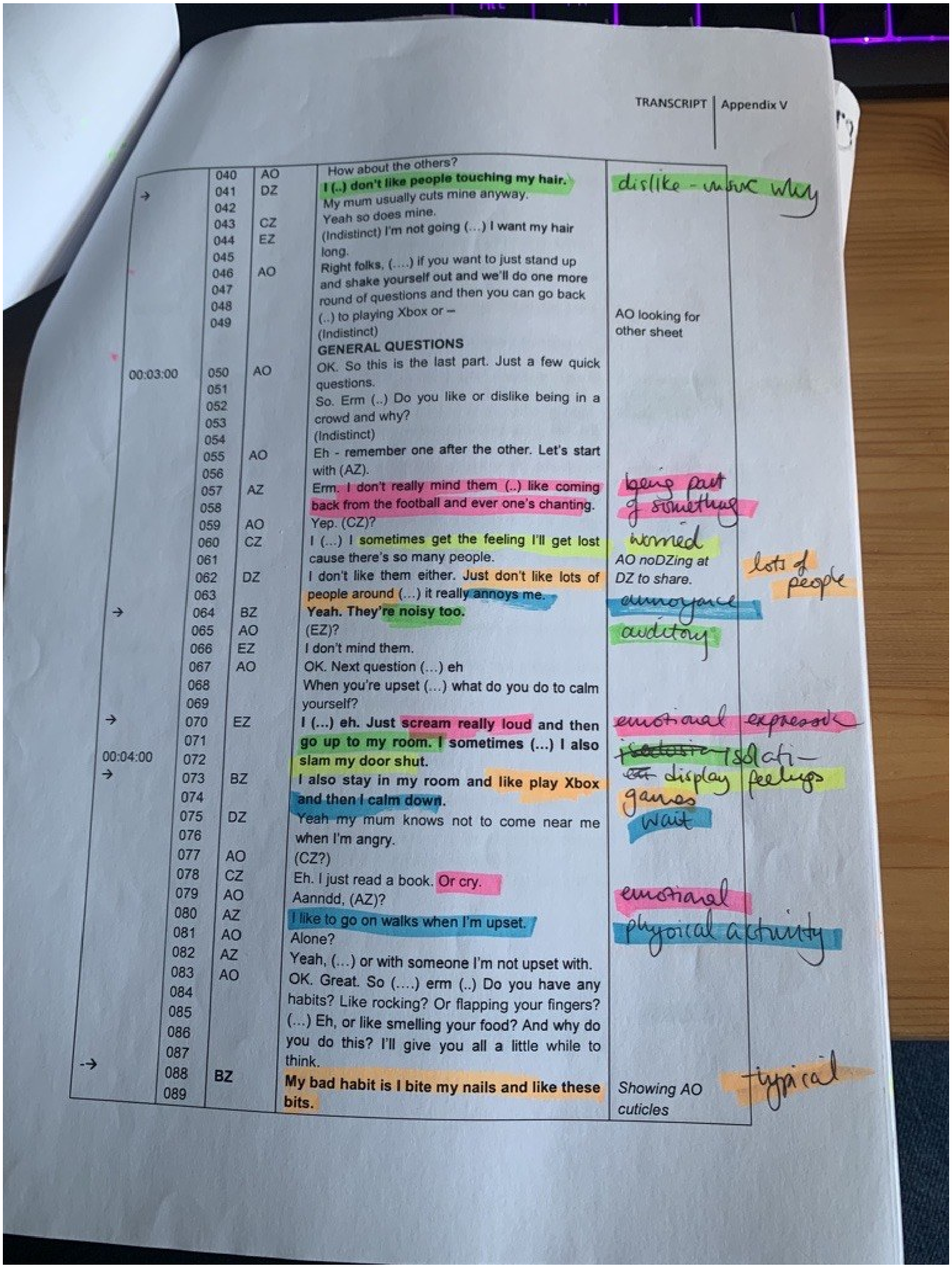
Option 2: Code using Word, by adding comments

However, if you do a qualitative project for your dissertation, other options will be open to you, so please do ask your supervisor what might be best!

8.1.4 Activities

8.1.4.1 Activity 1: Example of coding

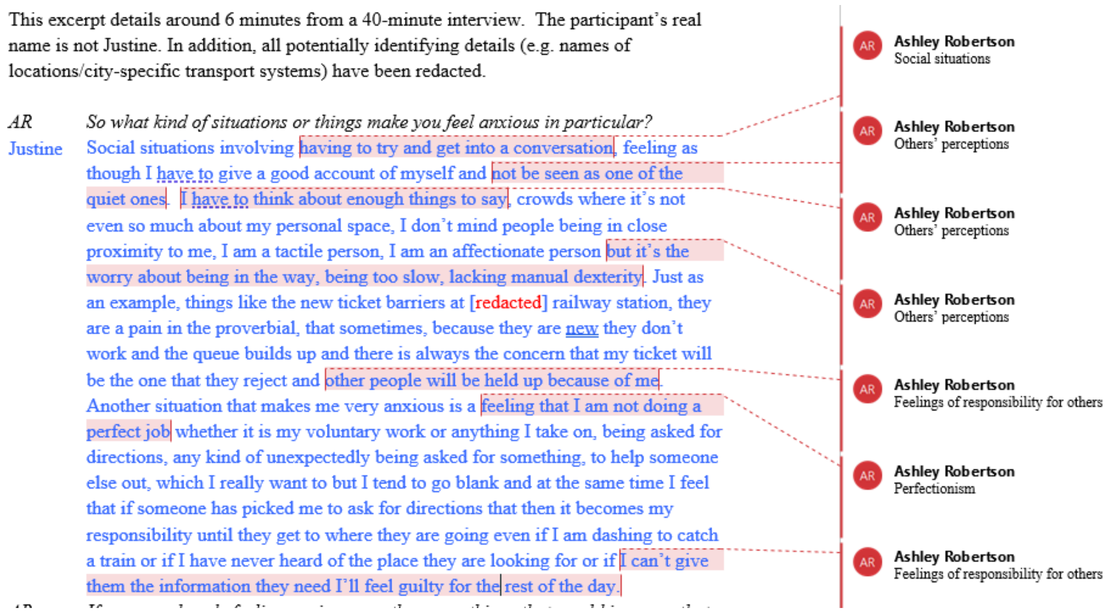
Have a look at this example of coding (using Thematic Analysis) from Braun & Clarke (2013)



TRANSCRIPT | Appendix V

	040	AO	How about the others?		
→	041	DZ	**I (..) don't like people touching my hair.**		dislike - [illegible] why
	042		My mum usually cuts mine anyway.		
	043	CZ	Yeah so does mine.		
	044	EZ	(Indistinct) I'm not going (...) I want my hair		
	045		long.		
	046	AO	Right folks, (....) if you want to just stand up		
	047		and shake yourself out and we'll do one more		
	048		round of questions and then you can go back		
	049		(..) to playing Xbox or –	AO looking for other sheet	
			(Indistinct)		
			GENERAL QUESTIONS		
00:03:00	050	AO	OK. So this is the last part. Just a few quick		
	051		questions.		
	052		So. Erm (..) Do you like or dislike being in a		
	053		crowd and why?		
	054		(Indistinct)		
	055	AO	Eh - remember one after the other. Let's start		
	056		with (AZ).		
	057	AZ	Erm. I don't really mind them (..) like coming		being part
	058		back from the football and ever one's chanting.		of something
	059	AO	Yep. (CZ)?		
	060	CZ	I (...) I sometimes get the feeling I'll get lost		worried
	061		cause there's so many people.	*AO noDZing at*	lots of
	062	DZ	I don't like them either. Just don't like lots of	*DZ to share.*	people
	063		people around (...) it really annoys me.		annoyance
→	064	BZ	**Yeah. They're noisy too.**		auditory
	065	AO	(EZ)?		
	066	EZ	I don't mind them.		
	067	AO	OK. Next question (...) eh		
	068		When you're upset (...) what do you do to calm		
	069		yourself?		
→	070	EZ	**I (...) eh. Just scream really loud and then**		emotional expression
	071		**go up to my room. I sometimes (...) I also**		~~[illegible]~~ isolation
00:04:00	072		**slam my door shut.**		display feelings
→	073	BZ	**I also stay in my room and like play Xbox**		games
	074		**and then I calm down.**		wait
	075	DZ	Yeah my mum knows not to come near me		
	076		when I'm angry.		
	077	AO	(CZ?)		
	078	CZ	Eh. I just read a book. Or cry.		emotional
	079	AO	Aanndd, (AZ)?		
	080	AZ	I like to go on walks when I'm upset.		physical activity
	081	AO	Alone?		
	082	AZ	Yeah, (...) or with someone I'm not upset with.		
	083	AO	OK. Great. So (....) erm (..) Do you have any		
	084		habits? Like rocking? Or flapping your fingers?		
	085		(...) Eh, or like smelling your food? And why do		
	086		you do this? I'll give you all a little while to		
	087		think.		
→	088	**BZ**	**My bad habit is I bite my nails and like these**	*Showing AO*	typical
	089		**bits.**	*cuticles*	

Figure 8.1: Example of a hand-coded transcript



This excerpt details around 6 minutes from a 40-minute interview. The participant's real name is not Justine. In addition, all potentially identifying details (e.g. names of locations/city-specific transport systems) have been redacted.

AR *So what kind of situations or things make you feel anxious in particular?*

Justine Social situations involving having to try and get into a conversation, feeling as though I have to give a good account of myself and not be seen as one of the quiet ones. I have to think about enough things to say, crowds where it's not even so much about my personal space, I don't mind people being in close proximity to me, I am a tactile person, I am an affectionate person but it's the worry about being in the way, being too slow, lacking manual dexterity. Just as an example, things like the new ticket barriers at [redacted] railway station, they are a pain in the proverbial, that sometimes, because they are new they don't work and the queue builds up and there is always the concern that my ticket will be the one that they reject and other people will be held up because of me. Another situation that makes me very anxious is a feeling that I am not doing a perfect job whether it is my voluntary work or anything I take on, being asked for directions, any kind of unexpectedly being asked for something, to help someone else out, which I really want to but I tend to go blank and at the same time I feel that if someone has picked me to ask for directions that then it becomes my responsibility until they get to where they are going even if I am dashing to catch a train or if I have never heard of the place they are looking for or if I can't give them the information they need I'll feel guilty for the rest of the day.

Ashley Robertson
Social situations

Ashley Robertson
Others' perceptions

Ashley Robertson
Others' perceptions

Ashley Robertson
Others' perceptions

Ashley Robertson
Feelings of responsibility for others

Ashley Robertson
Perfectionism

Ashley Robertson
Feelings of responsibility for others

Figure 8.2: Example of a transcript coded using comments on Microsoft Word

Think about the following:

Do you agree/disagree with the codes that the authors have chosen? Which ones, and why? Are there any additional codes that you think might be worthy of consideration?

8.1.4.2 Activity 2: Try it yourself!

It's time to have a go at coding yourself now!

Read through this transcript, taking brief notes individually the first time you read it. What things did you pick up?

Identify codes for this transcript and post them on the padlet. Ashley will then give class-wide feedback on the codes to the class.

8.2 Developing themes (Phases 3-6)

Here, we'll focus on Phases 3 to 6 of the process. You can find information on each of these phases in the Braun & Clarke (2021) book: Generating Initial Themes (p.78), Developing and Reviewing Themes (p.97), Refining, Defining and Naming Themes (p.108) and Writing up your Analysis (p.118). We also covered how to do Phase 3 in the Thematic Analysis lectures in Semester 1. For these activities, you are welcome to do them individually or in pairs/small groups - whichever you prefer!

8.2.1 Phase 3: Generating initial themes (p.78)

In this stage, you should sort the codes into potential themes. Here, you will start to analyse your codes, and consider how they might share an idea or concept.

It might be helpful to visualise this in some way, and see how the codes fit together. You may have codes that don't seem to fit anywhere, others will fit neatly into themes, others might be in sub-themes

You end this step with a collection of candidate themes (and potentially sub-themes)

Practical Steps

- Start to group your initial codes together
- Can you see a pattern of shared meaning across different codes?
- What are the similarities across codes?
- End this stage by collating all the coded quotes relevant to each theme.
- Themes can be descriptive or interpretative (see Braun & Clarke, 2013, Ch 11).
- Using tables or mind maps at this stage can be helpful

8.2.2 Phase 4: Developing and Reviewing themes (p.97)

In Phase 4, you check your themes to see whether they make sense a) when you look at the coded extracts for that theme and b) when you look at the whole dataset.

Checking the coded extracts

Reviewing at the level of the coded extracts. Read all the collated extracts for a theme…do they form a coherent pattern? Do they tell an important story about shared meaning? Are you sure they are themes rather than topic summaries?

If they seem like themes and the coded extracts fit well underneath them, then move on to checking the themes against the dataset.

If they don't, is it the case that a) the theme itself is problematic and needs reworked or b) the theme is fine, but some of the data doesn't fit?

Checking themes against the whole dataset

Look across the entire dataset and consider your theme(s) – do they accurately reflect the meanings in the dataset? Do they tell you about the important patterns that you observed in the dataset?

Practical Steps

- This involves checking that the themes 'work' in relation to both the coded extracts and the full data-set.
- Reflect on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data, and begin to define the nature of each individual theme, and the relationship between the themes.
- It may be necessary to collapse two themes together or to split a theme into two or more themes, or to discard the candidate themes altogether and begin again the process of theme development.
- It may be that your theme is actually a topic summary and needs reworked.
- Not every participant will make specific reference to every theme - that is ok - but think about how each person is represented in the analysis.
- It can be helpful at this stage to group the relevant quotes together that represent each given theme

8.2.3 Phase 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes (p.108)

- During this phase, you should define and refine the themes.
- Define and refine = identifying what this theme is about, what aspect of the data is captured by each theme?
- For each theme, you need to conduct and write a detailed analysis
- In your report, you will report one theme with sub-themes or two themes (no subthemes) – do they explain different things without overlapping too much?
- Try to choose names for themes that are not one word or likely to indicate topic summaries (see the Semester 1 Thematic Analysis Lectures if you want to revisit this)

Practical Steps

- This involves being able to explain each theme: 'What story does this theme tell?' and 'how does this theme fit into the overall story about the data?'.
- Identify the 'essence' of each theme and construct a concise, punchy and informative name. Usually, you would aim for two themes for the qualitative report

8.2.4 Phase 6: Writing up your Analysis (p.118)

- The analysis should provide a concise, coherent, logical, non- repetitive and interesting account
- The write up must provide sufficient evidence of the theme(s) (this is where the quotes come in!)

- The extracts you choose should clearly illustrate the theme

Practical Steps

- For the RM2 qualitative report, you should report either two themes (no subthemes) or one theme with 2-3 sub-themes. This is to allow you to balance depth and breadth.
- Try to include at least one or two 'longer' quotes for each theme, which allow you to explore them in depth. You can supplement these with shorter quotes too.
- If you are doing a qualitative dissertation, you will have scope to go further with your analysis; it is a good idea to discuss your data with your supervisor throughout the analytic process.

8.2.5 Activities

8.2.5.1 Activity 1: Try it yourself!

We've provided the same transcript as for phases 1-2, but it's a little longer (to give you more scope to develop themes) - it is linked here. You can use the codes you developed last time (adding to them for the additional parts of the transcript), or you can recode the data again if you prefer - either option is fine.

- Once you have your codes, try to organise them into themes.
- Group together the codes that seem similar in some way - can you think of an overarching 'theme' that describes them?
- Are there any codes that don't 'fit' anywhere? (that's okay if so!)
- Can you identify any quotes that you would use to evidence the themes? Do these definitely match well onto the theme?

8.2.5.2 Activity 2: Bad analysis

This is an additional activity and only if you have time/want to delve a bit further. Have a look at the analysis. This is an example from Braun & Clarke's book. Why do you think it might be considered a poor example of thematic analysis?

After you've finished, you can look at the points that Braun & Clarke identified. Did you identify any additional ones? Were there any you missed?

8.3 Developing a narrative

When doing your thematic analysis, it is important to develop a narrative and go beyond paraphrasing/summarising your data.

Thematic Analysis requires an active approach from an analyst. It is your role to make sense of the data and to present this in a coherent, understandable and accessible way to the reader. You will take these 'patterns of meaning' and make sense of/interpret them, and convey these to the reader.

One point to note: Remember that **themes do not emerge** - this suggests that they are lying in wait for you to discover them, and that the same themes would come up regardless of the analyst. This is not the case - your experiences and interpretations will affect the themes you end up with.

When you present your data in the analysis section, you will have a) your list of themes and b) your quotes. It is your job to combine these with analytical commentary, in order to tell the story of your data. It's not enough to present the themes and then back these up with quotes - your job is to add in a narrative that brings the themes and the evidence (i.e. quotes) together.

Semantic and latent analysis

Thematic Analysis allows you to explore *semantic* or *latent* themes (or both) in your analysis:

Semantic: captures explicitly-expressed meaning and stays close to the language of the participants/overt meaning of data, realist. This tends to be somewhat deductive. Semantic approaches still go beyond summarising/paraphrasing.

Latent: focuses on a deeper, more implicit meaning of the data. What are the underlying meaning, ideas, concepts? This tends to be a bit more inductive.

Things to be aware of in developing a narrative

1. Remember to introduce your theme to the reader – what is it about? Don't start a theme with a quote. If you have sub- themes, still introduce the overall theme briefly before you discuss your first sub-theme
2. Explain to the reader why you've chosen to include each quote. Why is it important enough to be included? What does it tell us about your data?
3. Focus on depth rather than breadth – it is important that we get a real sense of your theme. In the RM2 report you only have 3000 words in total, and so will have to choose what you discuss
4. Show the reader who each quote comes from - we should be able to match this up with the demographics table/list of interviews in the Methods section (which then gives us some context). You can do this by using pseudonyms and linking this to the table by using the same names there too.

5. Think about where the opportunities are in your data to go beyond description. Is there anything you can infer? If so, remember to be clear with the reader that this is your interpretation. Your reader should be able why you have interpreted the data this way from the quotes you've chosen.

8.3.1 Activities

8.3.1.1 Activity 1: Semantic vs. latent

To explore differences between semantic and latent coding, as well as analysing at an illustrative or analytical level, please read Braun and Clarke (2013) p207-210 and also p252-254.

8.3.1.2 Activity 2: Analysing vs. summarising

Read pages 8-12 from this thematic analysis on skin-picking. Here, the authors report three themes and then have a reflection at the bottom. Try to identify where the authors have gone beyond paraphrasing - discuss in your groups/pairs if you can.

8.3.1.3 Activity 3: Evaluating analysis and discussion sections

Do this exercise on evaluating analysis sections of published papers.

8.4 OPTIONAL: Research skills session - Preparing for data analysis

Ashley has recorded **optional** research skills sessions on different aspects of qualitative research. These sessions take a little bit deeper dive into some of the topics and may be particularly useful if you are planning on doing a qualitative dissertation next year.

Watch the video here

8.4.1 Thinking about reflexivity

We ask you to think about your own position in the research as part of your RM2 report (there is a section in the methods!).

This can be quite tricky to do, but is very important for qualitative research. Some suggestions to get you started:

- Think about the topic you are doing for your research and your position in it. Where would you place yourself in relation to it? What are your own views on the topic? Do you feel quite strongly about it or not?
- Write as you reflect. Writing – be it using pen or pencil on paper, typing on a keyboard, dictating to some voice capture device, or some other mode – is an important tool for developing reflexive depth. It is good to do this at various stages of the research process.
- Start with your own experiences, understandings and views, but then also try to interrogate those (i.e. why do you have these particular understandings, views etc.?)

Some questions that you might ask yourself:

- What do I expect to come up in the data? How does this relate to what we found?
- What broader experiences have I had that might influence how I'm thinking about this?
- What are my values (i.e. what is important to me)? What about my beliefs? How might these have infuenced my thinking?
- How might all of these be connected to my identities and the communities I am a part of?

8.4.2 Becoming familiar with the data

It's important to become familiar with the data in the process of doing the analysis. Read through your data and make the following notes:

- Things of potential interest
- Ideas that you might want to explore further when you are coding
- Your responses to the data (e.g. how do you feel when you read it?)

Try to unpick any assumptions you have that underpin your initial reactions and observations:

- What was familiar?
- What was unfamiliar/surprising?
- Why are you reacting to the data in that way?

8.4.3 Activity 1: Read this extract and take familiarisation notes

Read this extract and take some familiarisation notes for yourself (these are just for you and won't be shared). We will then go through what Braun & Clarke say about it.

Some context:

This activity is based on a data extract from an interview study exploring LGBT students' experiences of university life. The participant is a gay man – a mature student, who spoke English as a second language. The extract comes from early in the interview and in response to a question about whether he is 'out' as a gay man at university – whether he is openly gay.

In this activity (5 mins):

- First, reflect on your assumptions and expectations about this topic, and your positioning in relation to this topic (are you an insider researcher? Outsider?).
- Second, read the data extract and make some familiarisation notes.
- Braun and Clarke's familiarisation notes follow – reflect on similarities and differences in your and their analytic observations and 'take' on the data.

Info

Andreas: …I sometimes try to erm not conceal it that's not the right word but erm let's say I'm in a in a seminar and somebody- a a man says to me 'oh look at her' (Int: mm) I'm not going 'oh actually I'm gay' (Int: mm [laughter]) I'll just go like 'oh yeah' (Int: mmhm) you know I won't fall into the other one and say 'oh yeah' (Int: yep) 'she looks really brilliant' (Int: yep) but I sorta then and after them you hate myself for it because I I don't know how this person would react because that person might then either not talk to me anymore or erm might sort of yeah (Int: yep) or next time we met not not sit next to me or that sort of thing (Int: yep) so I think these this back to this question are you out yes but I think wherever you go you always have to start afresh (Int: yep) this sort of li- lifelong process of being courageous in a way or not …

Show me Braun & Clarke's familiarisation notes

- Andreas reports a common experience of presumed heterosexuality: coming out is not an obvious option.
- Social norms dictate a certain response; the presumption of heterosexuality appears dilemmatic, and he colludes in the presumption, but minimally (to avoid social awkwardness).

Looking a bit more deeply, Braun and Clarke speculated that Andreas values honesty and being true to yourself, but he recognises a socio-political context in which that is constrained, and walks a 'tightrope' trying to balance his values and the expectations of the context.

8.4.4 Activity 2: A code or a theme?

In this activity, we'll go through a handout that asks you whether something is a code or a theme.

For each label, decide whether it is a code or a theme.

- Keep in mind that although there is no absolute distinction between codes and themes, codes tend to have a single facet and capture one insight or observation about the data, whereas themes are ideally multifaceted and capture several insights and observations. Themes should also capture a pattern of shared meaning – this can be shared meaning on the data surface, or shared implicit or underlying meaning.
- Reflect on why you have decided that each code/theme is a code or theme. What features of the data, the label/name, and brief explanation of the scope and focus of each code/theme influenced your judgement?

Show me Braun & Clarke's solution

Coding label/theme name	Code or theme?
'Natural' gender difference	Code
Men's body hair is natural	Theme
Looks wrong when men remove hair	Code
Animal metaphor	Code
Men's body hair is unpleasant	Theme
Imperative to remove hair	Code
'Ideal' amount of hair	Code
Back hair is ALWAYS excessive	Code
Men's 'excess' body hair needs to be managed	Theme

Figure 8.3: Braun and Clarke's suggestions

Three themes were presented in the analysis: "Two themes capture contradictory ideas: that men's body hair is natural, and that men's body hair is unpleasant. A third theme introduces the concept of 'excess' hair, which allowed sense-making of this contradiction, mandating men's grooming of 'excessive' hair." (Terry & Braun, 2016, page 14)

8.4.5 Some common problems with thematic analysis

- Thematic analysis that fails to address the research question.

- Unconvincing or under-developed analysis: 1) Too many or too few themes 2) Too much overlap between themes or themes are unrelated 3) Themes are vague or not internally consistent or coherent
- Little or no analytic work has been carried out (for example, using data collection questions as 'themes').
- Topic summaries being presented as themes
- Mismatch between data and analytic claims (e.g. going beyond what your participants say)
- Too few or too many data extracts (and little or no analytic commentary).
- Paraphrasing rather than analysing and interpreting data
- Arguing with the data – pointing out the 'errors' in a participant's account.

8.4.6 Strategies for ensuring quality in your analysis

Reflexive journalling

- Reflect on your experiences throughout the whole research process (not just at the end!)
- Think about your emotional responses to the data
- Try to reflect on your assumptions that you already have about the topic

Talk about your data with others

- Discuss your analysis with other people - it helps to clarify your analytic insights
- Do phases 1-2 in pairs if you want
- Discuss your findings in groups
- Come along to office hours
- Present your analysis (even if its preliminary), this can help solidify where we are going with it

Give yourself time

- Try not to leave the analysis until the last minute
- Give yourself time to step away and breathe
- Perhaps work on other sections of your report at the same time, so that you have a mental break from analysis

Make sure themes are themes (and be careful when naming them)

Connelly and Peltzer (2016, p.55): "When a researcher designated a 1-word theme, such as 'collaboration', what does that mean in relationship to the experiences of the informants as interpreted by the researcher? Using only 1 word as a theme, there is no way of knowing, for example if the experiences of collaboration were positive or negative, or whether collaboration is important to the nurses. One-word themes do not convey what the researcher found out about collaboration"

9 Ethics, rigour and reflexivity

This chapter will help you to consider ethics and reflexivity in qualitative research.

9.1 Ethics

This section will talk you through the ethical considerations you need to conduct qualitative research. As you remember from RM1, every time we conduct research with human participants, we have to think carefully about the potential impact of our research and we must adhere to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics. Some of the ethical issues are common to both quantitative and qualitative research (for example, informed consent and the right to withdraw), but due to the nature of qualitative data, there are certain aspects we need to be particularly mindful about.

9.1.1 General ethical considerations

These are some of the things we **MUST** take into account when conducting research on human participants:

- Possible risks to participants (physical and/or psychological)
- The elimination or minimization of risks
- Justifying risks in terms of the scientific value of the results
- Ethical approval prior to the study
- The right to withdraw
- Informed consent
- Debriefing and aftercare of participants (especially with deception)
- Anonymity and appropriate data management

9.1.2 Activity 1: Identify potential ethical issues

Before reading on, try to think what ethical issues each of these elements of qualitative research might have:

- Research questions and interview/focus group questions
- Data collection

- Recording of interviews/focus group
- Anonymity
- Confidentiality

1. Research questions and interview/FG questions

This might look like: In qualitative research, we often ask about someone's lived experience, or their motivations, or a belief they have. This is quite different to quantitative research where data comes in as numbers and in that sense is less personal.

Why might this be an issue: Qualitative research tends to be on topics where we ask people to be vulnerable and open themselves up to us as researchers. If we don't frame this correctly, our interview schedule might contain questions that are inappropriate and uncomfortable for the participants.

2. Data collection

This might look like: Data collection is much less likely to be anonymous, as typically in-person or online focus groups or interviews are held. Samples are small, and participants may already be known to the researcher.

Why might this be an issue: There are possible issues of confidentiality, anonymity (these will be discussed further down) and bias. Our preconceptions might affect the way we frame the questions, how we interact with participants in the focus group, and how we interpret the data.

3. Recording of focus groups/interviews

This might look like: The majority of the time, focus groups and interviews are recorded (either audio + video or audio only). This means that the 'raw' data - as it were - is identifiable. In contrast, data for quant studies are often collected anonymously.

Why might this be an issue: Data should **always** be kept safe and secure. However, with qualitative data, there is a real risk that individual people could be identified from a recording of them. This means that dealing with the recordings in a safe and secure way are of utmost importance, and that participants cannot be identified from transcripts.

4. Anonymity

This might look like: In quantitative research, we tend to report summary statistics from groups, and therefore it'd be quite unusual to be able to identify a single participant from the data. With qualitative, it's a bit different. We collect people's words and experiences.

Why might this be an issue: It is easier to identify someone from the words they use, and the situations and circumstances they describe.

5. Confidentiality

This might look like: In a focus group or interview, people might be very open with us, and tell us things about their life, and the lives of others.

Why might this be an issue: We have a duty of care to keep anything that comes out in a focus group/interview confidential (unless they disclose a crime or someone is judged to be at risk). It's also vital that the rest of the focus group members keep the information confidential too.

How would you mitigate these issues?

9.1.3 Activity 2: Ethics in published studies

Look at the methods sections of these studies and try to identify how they have addressed ethical issues

- Scott et al., 2019
- Sutton & Stack, 2013
- Robertson & Simmons, 2015

9.1.4 Activity 3: Information sheet and constent form

Take a look at the (slightly modified) Information sheet and Consent form from a qualitative survey study that had ethical approval from the University. Can you identify where and how the principles listed in the General ethical considerations and Activity 1 are discussed?

9.1.4.1 Information sheet

How do perceived language barriers affect the teachers' experience teaching international students in higher education

Invitation My name is XX, and I am a student at the University of Glasgow. This study is conducted as a part of my MSc Psychological Studies Dissertation project. You are invited to take part in this study because you are currently teaching international students at a UK-based university. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like further details about the study before deciding whether you want to participate, please get in touch with us via email (XX@student.gla.ac.uk).

Brief Summary We are looking to learn more about higher education teachers' perceptions and experiences of language barriers. We are recruiting people who are currently teaching and/or supervising international students in a UK-based university. To understand your experience, opinions and thoughts on this topic, we are conducting the study through an online qualitative survey. Some issues which we are interested in learning more about include: 1) the impact of language barriers on teaching and supporting students who speak English as a second language; 2) how teaching staff perceive language barriers affecting them and their students; 3) possible ways to bridge the language barriers at different levels.

What's involved if I agree to take part? We want to support you in deciding whether this research study is suited to you - if upon reading this information sheet, you have more questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. If you choose to take part, we will ask you to provide informed consent, after which you will be asked to complete the survey, which consists of two parts: a brief demographic questionnaire, and six open-ended main questions about your experiences of language barriers in your teaching. The survey should take no longer than 40 minutes to complete, and you may take a break at any point if you wish. Because the data will be analysed using qualitative methods, we ask you to provide a comprehensive account of your experiences, but only to provide as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable sharing. Anonymised (see below) quotes from your responses may be used in the dissertation and other future dissemination to illustrate the findings. If you choose to withdraw from the study at any point, you may do so by simply closing your browser.

Confidentiality: Ways to protect your identity and data We do not want to reveal any personal information about yourself or your colleagues as part of this research. Your responses are recorded completely anonymously through Microsoft Forms and your name will not be recorded anywhere. Prior to the data analysis, all responses will be screened and further anonymised in case you have provided information which may be identifiable (such as specific course names or institutions). We will take the following steps to make sure that your personal information and particular details of your experiences are not shared.

- Your data will be assigned an anonymous participant ID automatically and password protected on a secure server
- Changing any names, places or organisations you write in your answers.
- All the research data will be securely stored to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) and only made accessible to future researchers in a form which protects individual, personal information.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? The materials do not involve anything that would affect you in a negative way – as explained above, you may share as much or as little detail about your experiences as you feel comfortable doing. You are also free to withdraw from the research by closing your browser at any point without giving any reason why.

Who is organising this research? This research is being conducted as part of an MSc Dissertation. The research is supervised by Dr Wilhelmiina Toivo, Wilhelmiina.toivo@glasgow.ac.uk and the research has been granted ethical approval from the University of Glasgow. If you would like further details about the study before deciding whether you want to participate, please get in touch with us via email. Many thanks, XX,

9.1.4.2 Consent form

Title of Project: How do perceived language barriers affect the teachers' experience teaching international students in higher education?

Researcher: XX, (Supervisor Wilhelmiina Toivo)

If you agree to participate in this study, then please read the following statements and indicate your consent by ticking the boxes for each statement

- I have read the Information Form for participants and so understand the procedures and have been informed about what to expect.
- I agree to participate in this study, which aims to investigate how perceived language barriers affect university teachers' experiences teaching and interacting with international students who speak English as their foreign language.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and that I can withdraw from the study, at any time and for any reason, by closing the browser.
- I understand that my participation in this project is for the purposes of research and is in no way an evaluation of me as an individual.
- I understand that any information given in the investigation will be made and kept anonymous and will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I understand that anonymous quotes from my responses may be used in academic publications/talks to illustrate the findings.
- I understand that I can contact the researcher for this project by e-mail to receive more information and/or a summary of the results.

9.2 Reflexivity

Please note: Some information below is included in the video for Research Skills for data analysis as well.

We ask you to think about your own position in the research as part of your report (there is a section in the methods, and you need to include a reflexivity diary as an appendix to your report!).

This can be quite tricky to do, but is very important for qualitative research. Some suggestions to get you started:

- Think about the topic you are doing for your research and your position in it. Where would you place yourself in relation to it?
- What are your own views on the topic? Do you feel quite strongly about it or not?

Write as you reflect. Writing – be it using pen or pencil on paper, typing on a keyboard, dictating to some voice capture device, or some other mode – is an important tool for developing reflexive depth. It is good to do this at various stages of the research process.

Start with your own experiences, understandings and views, but then also try to interrogate those (i.e. why do you have these particular understandings, views etc.?)

Some questions that you might ask yourself:

- What do I expect to come up in the data? How does this relate to what we found?
- What broader experiences have I had that might influence how I'm thinking about this?
- What are my values (i.e. what is important to me)?
- What about my beliefs? How might these have influenced my thinking?

Here we have some data from Braun & Clarke - there are different datasets to choose from. If you want to use the ones from Braun & Clarke, you can either choose the 'childfree' dataset or the 'healthy eating' dataset. However, we know that some topics might be difficult for people, so please do choose a topic of your own preference if you would rather - any qualitative dataset (e.g.from UK Data Service) or news article would be fine.

9.2.1 Activity 1

Spend about fifteen minutes reflecting on the topic and where you would place yourself in relation to it, both personally and more general views. Write as you reflect. Writing – be it using pen or pencil on paper, typing on a keyboard, dictating to some voice capture device, or some other mode – is an important tool for developing reflexive depth. Start with your own experiences, understandings and views, but then also try to interrogate those.

Ask yourself questions like:

- What assumptions am I basing my thinking on?
- What broader experiences and values might inform my thinking on this?
- How might these be connected to myself as a person, my various identities, my personal experience in relation to the topic, and the communities I am part of?

9.2.2 Activity 2

Discuss your experiences of reflecting with your group. Did you find it easier than expected? Was it harder? Was there anything that surprised you about the process? Please only share what you feel comfortable with.

9.2.3 Activity 3 (optional)

Ashley has some additional reflexivity probes and tips in her research skills session.

10 Group project

10.1 What is the group project?

In the group project, you will engage in three tasks that are designed to help you build your practical research skills in qualitative research. You will compile your answers to the tasks into a portfolio that you submit to Moodle as a group. Please refer to Moodle (Semester 1 Week 14) for a video overview of the project, and make sure that you have engaged with the Assessment Information section of the group portfolio before starting any work on it so you know what to expect.

To help you balance the different assignments in RM2, we have compiled a suggested timeline to help you is a suggested timeline for the qualitative portfolio and report

10.2 Getting to know each other in groups

This section is designed for you to engage with your group early, get to know each other, and develop some common guidelines for working together before you embark on the group project. If you haven't done so yet, please get in touch with your group now to complete the following activities. We have also provided a checklist of things to complete as a group before the start of semester 2.

10.2.1 Getting organised in groups checklist:

- Get in touch with group and make a group chat on Teams
- Introduce yourselves
- Post group introduction on RM2 channel
- Set up a regular check-in time and/or meeting with group
- Discuss group agreement and decide together on items to include
- Submit group agreement to Moodle (individually)
- Read effective group work document and discuss your strengths as a group
- Download the group work template and assign tasks

10.2.2 Activity 1: Create a group chat and set up an initial meeting

Get in touch with your group and create a Teams chat. You **MUST** use Teams for all communication about the group project. Do not use any other platforms (such as Whatsapp, WeChat, Facebook etc.) as these can lead to people being excluded. Set up a meeting in which you will discuss Activity 3 from this chapter. After the initial meeting, set up a regular check-in time. This doesn't necessarily need to be a meeting every time, you can also do it over text. You will need to coordinate between time zones/work calendars/other responsibilities

DO: Communicate regularly and be clear about where and how you are going to communicate about the group project. Be proactive if you are having a busy time and let your group know.

DON'T: Disappear and stop talking to your group if you're having a hard time (if something happens and you don't feel comfortable sharing with your group, you can let the course leads know). Don't agree to meeting times that don't suit you.

10.2.3 Activity 2: Introductions

Introduce yourself to your group members on your Teams chat. In your introduction, tell your group where you are based, which parts of the degree you have enjoyed the most up to date and what is your favourite R function. As a group, find one *non-psychology/university related thing that you all have in common* and share that on the RM2 Teams channel in the thread. Bonus points for the most random common thing!

10.2.4 Activity 3: Group agreements

We appreciate that group work can be challenging (and even more so if you are spread all over the World!) and we want to support you to have an enjoyable and educational group work experience. To that end, we would like each group to create a group agreement that all members sign. We also ask that you complete a task allocation and upload this with your agreement (they are in the same template). The purpose of this is for the group to come together and establish common ground and some rules that each of the group members is committed to. It also means that the group begins working with clearly allocated roles and tasks. This is not to mean that you cannot change tasks later, but it is helpful to set expectations from the outset.

You can download the group agreement template.

Then look at the list of potential items to include below, and as a group, discuss which items you want to include in addition to the standard ones provided, and if there are any you would like to edit or add outside of this list. You will be able to find a sample list of tasks to include for the task allocation in Appendix 1 within the template.

Work on a collaborative document on OneDrive to create your group work agreement and task allocation, and once the group is happy with their agreement and initial tasks, each group member should submit it to Moodle individually (on the Formative Activities tile). ***Please submit your group agreement by the end of week 14 of semester 1.*** If you haven't submitted your agreements and task allocation, we will be in touch to check up on your group.

Group agreement items

Here is a list of items you may want to discuss with your group and add to the group agreement:

- We all agree to establish a common timeline for the project and discuss any deviations from the timeline together as a group
- We all agree to communicate with each other openly and honestly about the project and get in touch with the course leads in the event of an unsolvable group conflict.
- We all agree to respect each other's individual ways of working and discuss these openly as a group.
- We all agree to respect diversity in our group. This includes cultural differences, neurodiversity, different work/life situations and may manifest in different ways of working/approaching tasks.
- We agree to discuss our strengths as a group and divide tasks accordingly.
- I agree to stay in touch with the group and communicate as established by the group. If I am struggling and I do not feel comfortable sharing that with the group, I will get in touch with the course/programme leads for support
- We all agree to meet on a regular basis as established by the group. If I cannot make a meeting I agree to communicate this openly with my group and get in touch to catch up about things I have missed.
- We agree to plan out the individual contribution of each team member in advance before group work starting and openly communicate any changes that may arise during the project.
- We agree to establish the best method of communication for our group that's inclusive and takes into account everybody's individual needs.

10.2.5 Activity 4: Read the Effective Group work document

This document can be used as a checklist to do the group work for your qualitative portfolio. Give it a read and then discuss it with your group once you have your initial meeting.

10.2.6 Activity 5: Assign tasks

Work back from the deadline to establish tasks and when they need to be done. Discuss your strengths and what each person in the group would like to do.

10.3 Qualitative portfolio guidelines and materials

You will complete three tasks: Qualitative questions (Task 1a and 1b), Ethics (Task 2) and Terrible focus group (Task 3). Below, you will find information and the required materials to complete each task. Please use this template to complete your submission.

10.3.1 Task 1a: Qualitative questions

Below, you will find a brief overview of a study topic. In this task, we would like you to imagine that you are collecting data for this qualitative study. A variety of different data collection methods are possible (e.g. interview, focus group, open-ended survey questions). Thinking about the topic and research question presented below, please develop **SIX** questions that you would ask your participants to gather data on the topic of interest. Your questions should be open-ended, clear, concise and appropriate, and the order that they are presented in should make sense. Your aim is to develop questions that would be likely to generate open discussion and rich responses from participants.

Please note: This section (1a) does not contribute towards the 1000 word count for the assessment.

Study overview

Universities provide support for students, and this support can come in many forms, from free counselling services to well-being advisors (Raunic & Xenos, 2008).
In one study, it was reported that only 3% of students used their university counselling service, and only 5% of those who were characterised as vulnerable based on questionnaire scores, used the services (Cooke et al., 2006). This suggests that the majority of students did not make use of services available.
There are many reasons why students may not choose to seek help, including being unaware of services, low socio-economic status, being from different cultural background, embarrassment about having to seek help, and scepticism about the services (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Gulliver et al., 2010).
Another issue around seeking support is that many who do chose to get help, have to wait long periods for appointments (Mowbray et al., 2006). In a recent article reported in the Independent, a waiting time of 4 months was cited for some universities. These delays to support, can lead to emergence of mental health crises situations. Unfortunately, in this the University of Glasgow had one of the longest wait times for counselling (Buchan, 2018).
Research question: What are student's views on how universities can support students and their mental health needs?

10.3.2 Task 1b: Qualitative questions reflection

For task 1B, please reflect on your experience of generating the questions in task 1A. Do you think they would achieve what you want to achieve? Why or why not? Was it easier or harder than you expected? Please link to the evidence base in your answer (suggested word count: 250 words)

10.3.3 Task 2: Ethics

With the Open Science movement, the use of Open, secondary datasets has become a more popular way of conducting research. You've learnt about the importance of Open data in terms of reproducibility and replicability for quantitative research in RM1 - however, the benefits and challenges of Open data are quite different in qualitative research and there are a number of ethical issues associated with sharing qualitative research data openly. For task 2 of your portfolio, we would like you to **identify one ethical issue** associated with the sharing and/or use of open qualitative data, and discuss why it is an issue, and how it could be mitigated. In your response, you should cite relevant literature on the use of open qualitative data, as well as the BPS code of Ethics (suggested word count 250 words)

10.3.4 Task 3: Focus group gone wrong

Here is a short video from a fictional focus group that is conducted very badly (*please note this video is created only for the purposes of this assessment, is not from a real focus group, and should not be shared outside of this course!*).

Your task is to **identify two or three issues with how the focus group is run** and discuss why they are problematic and outline possible ways to improve them. In your response, you should cite relevant literature to support your ideas.

Access the Focus Group gone wrong recording

10.3.5 Where to get guidance for the portfolio tasks?

You should make sure you are up to date on Ashley's lectures on qualitative research. Further, some of the chapters in this book have activities and information which will be helpful in completing the portfolio:

- Chapter on Qualitative questions
- Chapter on Data collection
- Chapter on Ethics, Rigour and Reflexivity

11 Academic writing

This chapter has some activities to help with your academic writing.

11.1 Evaluation in introductions

The activities in this section are designed to help you improve your evaluation in the introduction of your RM2 report (and your dissertation). To re-cap from RM1, the purpose of your introduction is to provide a rationale for your study and answer the **WHY** question; why is your study worth doing? You want to sell your idea to the reader, using existing literature to show how you are building on the evidence that is there.

Although 'identifying the gap' is something that is often key in quantitative research, building a rationale is not exactly the same in qualitative research. This is because qualitative research tends to be very much situated in the context of the particular study (i.e. why is this particular research topic or question important in this context/with this group). Regardless of whether you include a gap or not (you still can), you should convey to your reader **why** your study matters (or why a gap you've identified is important to explore).

Things to do and things to avoid

1. Avoid doing one study per paragraph – instead, build your arguments using multiple sources
2. Avoid describing previous studies in a lot of detail – instead, show how your study builds on them
3. Avoid critiques that your study cannot answer - instead, focus on aspects that your study will address
4. Just because something is never done before, doesn't make it worth doing; show with evidence why we should do the study.

Here are paragraphs from an imaginary introduction to a qualitative study investigating postgraduate students' confidence in their zombie apocalypse survival.

For each, you can click on them to have a look in depth.

Show me Example 1: Using one source, writing descriptively

A study by Lane and Karin (2011) looked at zombie apocalypse survival confidence levels in undergraduate students. The sample consisted of 25 participants (20 male and 5 female), recruited through convenience sampling. The study employed involved a survey comprising Likert-scale questions designed to measure participants' self-assessed confidence in various survival skills. Additionally, participants were asked about their exposure to zombie-related media. The data were subjected to t-tests and regression analyses, and the authors' found that the biggest predictor of zombie apocalypse confidence was exposure to zombie-themed video games.

This paragraph uses just one source, and describes the study in a lot of detail. Instead, it would be better to synthesise evidence from multiple studies and focus on what the findings mean, rather than being descriptive about the studies. Something like:

A study by Lane and Karin (2011) found that the biggest predictor of zombie apocalypse survival confidence levels in undergraduate students was exposure to zombie-themed video games. Miller and Williams (2023) had similar findings, but exposure to zombie films was also a significant predictor of confidence. This suggests that simulation through media is an effective way to increase self-efficacy towards an unknown threat, which has also been found with alien attack research (Ripley, 2017).

Show me Example 2: Making criticisms that are outwith the scope of your study

It should be noted that the majority of studies on zombie apocalypse survival confidence have looked at samples that consist of mostly men (Lane & Karin, 2011 but see also Grimes & Dixon, 2019), and that previous samples have been small.

This paragraph makes a criticism that the study cannot address - issues with sample size are not something that we can address with qualitative designs.

Instead, to create a stronger rationale, it would be better to focus your critical evaluation on aspects which your study actually builds on:

While evidence on the behavioural predictors of zombie apocalypse confidence is robust, the majority of research (see Anderson, 2014) has focused on the exposure time to media and survival skills training. Hence, we lack understanding of how participants perceive their confidence beyond simulation experiences.

Show me Example 3: Why is your study worth doing?

To date, there has been only one qualitative study on the topic – Seok (2013) collected data through semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using thematic analysis and two themes, "Survival mode" and "Confidence through skills" were identified. This study looked at undergraduate students; there is no previous literature on postgraduate students' perceptions of their apocalyptic confidence. Therefore, this qualitative study investigates

the perceived confidence of postgraduate students in their abilities to survive a zombie apocalypse.
Just because it's never been looked at doesn't automatically mean it should be - show with evidence why and how you would expect your new sample/method/something else about the study to differ from previous research and why it's worth exploring:
Previous research has looked at undergraduate students; however, it has been suggested that postgraduate students would be the group most at risk during a zombie apocalypse (Williams, 2021), but also that apocalyptic self-efficacy decreases with age (Anderson, 2004). This suggests that postgraduate students are the most mentally and physically vulnerable group during a zombie apocalypse, and hence it is important to understand their perceptions of apocalypse confidence, and the lack of thereof.

11.1.1 Activity 1: RM1 feedback

Go back to your feedback from RM1 and see what your marker has said about the evaluation ILO and comments for your introduction. List two things that you did well, and two things you want to improve for RM2. If you would like to discuss the feedback and possible improvement points further, you can pop to Wil's or Ashley's office hours.

Quite often what we see is students engaging with a lot of literature in the intro (which is good!), but not really building a rationale or explaining with evidence why the study is worth doing. We want you to move beyond describing the research to critically evaluating it to show how your study expands on existing knowledge.

11.1.2 Activity 2: Top tips and rationales in published papers

Tip 1: Show how your study builds on existing literature When you are building your rationale, try to use multiple studies to show your reader what the current context of the literature is, and how your study is expanding that knowledge. What new is your study bringing? How is it expanding on existing studies?

If you look at these paragraphs from Robertson et al. (2018), they are building the rationale for their study by showing how it expands on existing literature:

Building a rationale

"Kerns and Kendall (2012) published an updated review of the prevalence of anxiety in individuals with ASD, and all studies fell within White et al. (2009)'s original range for anxiety symptoms (11–84%). It should be noted that, of the 24 studies included in the review, only two reported data for individuals older than 19 years of age (Bakken et al., 2010, Hofvander et al., 2009), which illustrates the need to also focus on adults with ASD

in future research (Howlin, 2000)."
"Secondly, as far as we are aware, there have been no qualitative studies investigating anxiety in autism using semi-structured interviews. Although focus groups and interviews are both good data collection methods for qualitative data, there is evidence that individual interviews tend to elicit a broader range of discussion points (Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley, & McKenna, 2017). Again, this further extends the previous investigation conducted by Trembath et al. (2012)."

Tip 2: Focus your criticism

When you are critically evaluating studies in your introduction, make your criticism focused on things that your study is addressing. This helps you build the rationale. For example, for the RM2 report, don't focus on the sample size and generalisability of existing studies in your introduction, because these are not things that your study will actually be able to address. Instead, focus on gaps/problems your study can address.

If you look at this paragraph from Toivo & Scheepers (2019), they are identifying a gap/problem in existing literature and showing how the new study is addressing this:

Focusing cricitism

"A potential issue in the above SCR studies (as well as in some of the cognitive studies discussed earlier) is that the stimuli were not very tightly controlled in terms of lexical variables (length, frequency, abstractness, etc.), or in terms of syntactic/pragmatic complexity when multi-word phrases were used. This, again, introduces a number of potential confounds (both within and across languages), making it difficult to separate effects of emotional resonance from those related to cognitive effort in word processing. In the present study, we aimed at eliminating such potential confounds by matching our stimuli on a number of lexical variables–as was done in the ERP studies discussed above [22, 23]–and by avoiding the use of translation equivalents."

Tip 3: Draw arguments from related topics.

Sometimes if your topic has not been studied much, it might be difficult to create an evidence-based rationale for your research question. In this case, you can draw logical parallels from related topics/domains. Remember to explain to the reader why you would expect the findings to generalise across the related topics.

If you look at this paragraph from Mahrholz et al. (2018), it acknowledges that evidence on what they are looking at is scarce in voice perception, but the same effect has been found in face perception:

Drawing arguments from other topics

"Similarly, looking at reliability of personality traits across presentation durations, Willis and Todorov [40] found that ratings of trustworthiness, competence, likeability, aggressiveness, and attractiveness for faces, showed moderate to strong positive correlations after 100 ms, 500 ms, and 1000 ms, when compared to ratings made without time constraints. Only participants' confidence in their own judgements increased as a function of duration. Likewise, again using photographs of faces, Bar et al. [33] reported medium positive correlations between ratings at 39 ms and 1700 ms. The authors indicated that the lower threshold was sufficient for reliable assessments of threat but not intelligence, supporting the theory that rapid first impressions serve as a mean of self-preservation and help determine appropriate approach-avoidance behaviour [1, 33, 38]. The idea being that it should not require much information to decide whether a stranger is friend or foe. Finally, Todorov and colleagues [39] obtained a similar finding, again for faces, showing 33 ms of exposure to be sufficient to distinguish between trustworthy- and untrustworthy-looking stimuli. Whilst correlations with control ratings improved between 33 ms and 100 ms, increased exposure duration did not significantly increase the correlations.
In voice research, though there are limited studies that consider the reliability of personality judgements across varying lengths of stimulus types, similar findings have been shown as in face research."

11.1.3 Activity 3: Active reading

When you are reading journal articles, make sure to take notes and think of how each article can be used to build your rationale in the introduction. Here is a resource you can use to help structure your notes about the studies you are going to use for your introduction.

11.2 Evaluation in your analysis section

11.2.1 Activity 1

Complete this activity to improve your evaluation for your thematic analysis, (as well as the discussion section). You may have already completed this as a part of your Data analysis chapter, but if you haven't please do it now. We ask you to compare two published papers against some of the qualitative report ILOs.

11.2.2 Activity 2: Going deeper in your analysis

One of the characteristics of a strong analysis section is that the writer demonstrates an ability to go beyond paraphrasing/summarising. This activity is designed to help you understand what might be involved in doing so.

Read the following two extracts from an Analysis section and discuss these questions:

1. Which of the two examples is better? Why?
2. What have the authors done that makes the analysis better?

Extract 1 - from a study about the impact of the COVID pandemic

Sarah spoke of using her leisure time to plan and fantasise about her wedding:
"it's enough of a fantasy... it's meant to be stressful, but it's really just been fun. It's like such a nice break from this humdrum life we're living in right now" (Sarah: lines 459-461).
Organising a significant life event seems to be viewed as granting Sarah an escape from her current monotony. While she refers to it as a "fantasy", potentially given uncertainty of the pandemic's progression, she appears to perceive this as constructive and realistic for her future self. Alternately, Mandy's leisure activity involved impossible daydreams:
"I started daydreaming more ridiculous stuff... I know it's never going to come true 'cause it's not real, but it still entertains me" (Mandy: lines 443-444)
While Mandy seems to be under no illusion that her daydreams are feasible, daydreaming impossible scenarios appears to provide more of a release than realistic situations that are subject to ever changing government regulations (e.g. travel bans) that may fall through.

Extract 2 - from a study about social media use during the pandemic

Some participants said it was difficult to fall asleep at night, including those who knew they should fall asleep but could not (*"if I can't stay up and can't sleep"- Sarah*), or participants subjectively thought that they did not need sleep or did not want to fall asleep (*"I am not really able to sleep at night, or like, sleep isn't really needed."* -Andrew)
Participants said that they used social media but that it was only positive at certain points:
I feel like TikTok was fun in the first lockdown during the summer,'cause of all this summer content I guess, but after that it really went downhill. I don't know like, OK personally I deleted all my apps about three weeks ago (John)
John tells us here that he deleted all his apps, because they all went 'downhill'. Tik Tok was helpful during the first lockdown, but not after it.

Show me the answer

Example 1 (COVID):
This is the better example, because it goes beyond paraphrasing. The researcher is analysing the quotes and have engaged with the meaning behind the words. Each quote is selected in a way that helps the author build a narrative of what is happening in the

data
Example 2 (sleep): This is the weaker example, because the author just paraphrases what the participants say. This ends up not adding any real value in terms of analysis, because the reader could just read the quote. The narrative needs to analyse the data and show the reader why they interpret something in a particular way.

11.3 Evaluation in discussions

In this section, we aim to provide some guidance about how to go beyond description in your writing. We will specifically focus on the Discussion section for your RM2 qualitative report here, but you can apply this to other types of writing. In particular, it should be helpful for you as you proceed to your dissertation.

11.3.1 What were your findings?

In your discussion section, start off by telling us what you found in your analysis. However, the key thing to think about here, in terms of evaluation, is to relate your findings to the wider research. It will be likely a good idea to consider on a theme by theme basis (if you are doing themes with no sub-themes) or on a subtheme basis (if you have one theme with 2-3 subthemes).

Some things to consider:

- What did you find? What was your specific contribution?
- Thinking about your findings, what are the similarities and differences from other research findings/theory? Why might this be the case?
- Situate your findings within the broader context - tell the reader about why your findings are important. This can help a reader understand the importance of the results.
- Do your findings challenge existing research? If so, in what way?
- Can you bring in any critical thinking?

11.3.1.1 Activity 1

Read the paragraphs below from Crompton et al., (2020) and think about what the authors are communicating, with a view to considering the points above.

In particular, identify:

- How the authors summarised their results
- The contribution of the themes to the evidence base
- How the authors discuss their results in relation to existing research

- How the authors relate their findings to theory
- How the authors link the findings to 'broader issues'

Study 1: Crompton et al., 2020

This study aimed to examine the experiences of autistic adults spending time with autistic and non-autistic family and friends using a thematic analysis framework. Social relationships are an important, though often complicated, part of autistic people's lives. Previous research has tended to focus on autistic people's relationships with (assumed) non-autistic friends and family. Here, we specifically contrasted relationships across and within neurotypes. The analysis revealed three themes: cross-neurotype understanding, minority status and belonging. The themes help us understand why relationships between autistic and non-autistic people might be so challenging, and how relationships between autistic people are different.

The results align with previous research on the challenges that autistic people face when interacting with non-autistic others, but highlight that interactions with other autistic people are fundamentally different. All participants reported that spending time with non-autistic family and friends involved specific difficulties, which were not experienced when interacting with other autistic friends and family. This aligns with the double-empathy theory of autism which suggests that autistic and non-autistic people have a mutual difficulty in understanding and empathising with one another due to differences in how each person understands and experiences the world, rather than because of a communicative deficit on the part of the autistic person (Milton, 2012). Neurotypical people have been shown to overestimate how ego-centric their autistic family members are (Heasman & Gillespie, 2018), and overestimate how helpful they are to autistic people (Heasman & Gillespie, 2019). Our findings suggest that this translates into real-world difficulties in interactions with neurotypical friends and family that may affect the mental health, well-being and self-esteem of autistic people.

11.3.2 What are the implications of the study?

In addition to theoretical implications you would discuss in a quantitative study, there is scope to discuss broader implications here. Try not to go too far in these implications (e.g. saying that the NHS/University could make changes to how they run mental health services…this would require a much more extensive body of work).

Some things to consider:

- How could these findings be applied to real-life situations?
- What impact might this have for society in the future (even if with the caveat that it would depend on future research)?
- Can you back up your assertions with reference to the literature? Arguments here are much stronger if you are able to cite papers to support.

11.3.2.1 Activity 2

Read the paragraph below from Robertson et al. (2018) and think about how the authors have communicated the implications of the research.

In particular, identify:

- What the implications of the research are
- How the authors link the findings to practical suggestions
- How the authors back up these suggestions to the existing literature base

> Study 2: Robertson et al., 2018
>
> There are a number of potential clinical applications for the findings detailed in this paper. They echo the modifications that are already undertaken for anxiety interventions designed for children and adolescents with ASD (Walters, Loades, & Russell, 2016). For example, it may be important to include support for individuals undertaking an intervention for their anxiety. This has already been identified as helpful in anxiety management interventions for children with ASD (Sofronoff et al., 2005), but the evidence here suggests that this might also be the case for adults. Furthermore, as adults reported feeling that they enjoyed interacting with other autistic people, it would be important to test whether running autism-only groups in terms of anxiety interventions helps outcomes or other aspects related to the feasibility of anxiety management programs (e.g. retention of participants).

11.3.3 Limitations

All research will have limitations - there is never going to be a perfect study. Research is about weighing up the options and choosing the best design for the specific question we want to answer. Remember that qualitative research is not automatically limited because it is not quantitative. Therefore, be very careful not to use criteria we have for quantitative studies (e.g. generalisability, reliability, small sample sizes) and apply them to qualitative studies. Doing so would be similar to critiquing a behavioural study for not asking participants about their experience of interacting with the stimuli ;)

Some things to consider:

- Do you think the quality, source, or types of data (or the analytic process) might have affected the methodological integrity in some way? If so, how?
- Remember to link your limitations to the evidence base. This makes your argument much stronger than if you do not cite to back your points up.
- If you want to mention generalisability, perhaps consider the concept of transferability instead, which is much more relevant to qualitative.

- Try to aim for depth rather than breadth here - it's much stronger to have two points addressed comprehensively than have 12 limitations, each covered in a single sentence (you don't want to make your discussion section a limitations-fest!).

11.3.3.1 Activity 3

Read the paragraph below from Toivo & Scheepers (2019). Although this is not a qualitative paper, the following paragraph exhibits many of the strengths noted above.

In particular, identify:

- What was the limitation observed?
- How do the authors discuss this limitation, and consider the effect it might have had?
- How do the authors back up their arguments with evidence from the literature base?

> Study 3: Toivo et al., 2019
>
> One concern might be that we did not explicitly control for L2 proficiency in our sample of bilinguals, which is likely to affect cognitive effort in processing L2. However, all of our bilingual participants (a) self-reported to be highly proficient in English, (b) were Glasgow University students using English as their language of study, and (c) had been living in an English-speaking country for minimum of three months (average: two years and four months) when the study was conducted. Together with the fact that post-trial word recognition rates were well above 90% across participant groups and conditions (Fig 2), we do not believe that variation in L2 proficiency was large enough to have a major impact on our results. That said, we agree that proficiency should ideally be controlled for in future research, e.g. by adding a suitable measure as another person-specific covariate in the analyses. Previous research had identified proficiency as a potential mediating factor of perceived emotionality in the Bilingualism and Emotions Questionnaire [50], and it had also been suggested that bilinguals with close-to-native proficiency in L2 show similar affective processing in L1 and L2 [19].

11.3.4 Anything else?

The points above are the key components that we would expect to see in a Discussion section, with some guidance on how to go beyond description. However, you might also consider strengths and future research. It's also good to include a brief conclusion. You won't have the word count available to go into the same detail as in these papers, so try to use the examples above to really focus on what you can incorporate within your Discussion section to strengthen your evaluative writing.

12 Qualitative report

In this section, you will find information and guidance about your qualitative report and a report writing guide. Please make sure to familiarise yourself with the Assessment Information before starting to work on the report. We have also provided a suggested timeline for the qualitative report and portfolio

For this assignment, you will be asked to write an individual qualitative report on one of five secondary data topics. You should conduct Thematic Analysis on your chosen dataset. A video on the Qualitative report will be provided on Moodle - please make sure to watch this. We provide guidelines on the report later in this chapter

12.1 Report datasets and how to use UK data service

Before accessing your datasets, watch this video on how to use UK data service. It shows you an example of how to download the data with one of the datasets. Please note that some of the datasets are on sensitive topics, and contain information that may be upsetting: make sure to familiarise yourself with the interview schedules and have a quick scan of the data before you decide which dataset to work with.

The UK data service can be accessed here

You can choose one of the five available datasets:

1. Interviews with disabled young people and carers
2. LGBT+ networks in the workplace
3. Long-term relationships
4. Patient descriptions of PMS
5. Student experiences of loneliness and social connectedness

12.2 Developing a research question

As part of writing up your qualitative report, we ask that you develop a research question to help you guide your enquiry. Below, we have some guidance on how to get started.

12.2.1 Getting started with the data

For this report, you are using secondary data. This means that the data have already been collected - before you start thinking about your research question, have a look at the interviews to see what was asked in the interviews. Usually, most interviews are semi-structured. This means that there are likely to be some questions asked consistently, but there will also be differences, depending on the responses by the participants.

Looking at the data before you decide on your RQ might feel a bit strange after RM1, but remember that you are not doing hypothesis-testing with qualitative designs - it is quite normal for a qualitative research question to change during the research process, and this is completely fine as you are not statistically testing for a specific effect.

Be mindful that you are not making a research question that is actually one of the interview questions - your RQ should be broader than an interview question.

One of the most common mistakes that students make when framing their research question in RM2 is that it is a little too 'quant' in nature. This makes perfect sense, as most of your research methods education so far in the programme has been focused on quant! However, for your qual report, your RQ should be a little different to the RQs you are used to.

Look at the following examples:

1. How does poor sleep impact on wellbeing?
2. What is the difference in wellbeing between those who belong to university and those who don't?

Both questions are a bit too quantitative in nature (i.e. 1 is causal and 2 is about a difference between groups). They would also benefit from thinking about what is being looked at, specifically (e.g. views, opinions, experiences).

We'd perhaps rephrase these as follows:

1. What are students' perceptions of the relationship between sleep and wellbeing?
2. What are online conversion students' experiences of belonging to University? How do these experiences relate to perceived wellbeing?

These questions are now a bit more in line with qualitative and are specific about what they are asking in each (and also what the group of interest is). The second one covers a bit more than the first, which is why it is split into two (a main RQ and a subsidiary one)

12.2.2 Some tips for developing a research question

- **Communication:** Keep your research question simple and specific. If you have a very broad question, it can be helpful to break the question down into smaller sub-questions.
- **Type of question:** We want the RQ to tap in to more than 'descriptive' experience but also offer scope to explore the 'how' and 'why' of psychological experience–Is the question asking about experiences, understanding, accounts of practice, or influencing factors?

- **Practical constraints:** Can the question realistically be explored using thematic analysis and using secondary data? Try not to cover too much
- **Guiding:** Remember that your RQ guides your enquiry but shouldn't be restrictive - it's not the case that you are unable to report themes that don't directly answer your RQ.
- **Flexibility:** Research questions are more flexible than hypotheses-it is acceptable for the focus of the RQ to be refined during/after data collection.

12.2.3 Formative feedback on your RQ

If you would like to receive formative feedback on your RQ, you can submit it on this Padlet by the end of Semester 2 Week 5. Please note that RQs submitted later than that will not receive feedback, and you would need to drop into office hours instead.

If you would like to discuss your RQ, you can also attend Ashley's and Wil's office hours.

12.3 Qualitative report guide

This guide is intended to help you in the write up of your qualitative project report. When writing your report, remember to use the other resources available to you:

- Your feedback for your RM1 report
- Chapter 13 in Braun & Clarke (2013) is excellent support for writing up qualitative research
- Braun & Clark (2021) book
- All the resources available in this book (particularly sections for 8. Data analysis and 11. Academic writing
- **25/26 cohort reading list:**: Published articles that use a Thematic Analysis
- A helpful resource for APA formatting is OWL Purdue

Use the assessment criteria as a checklist before you submit the report, to ensure you have addressed all points. If you have questions post on Teams and/or visit our office hours. All the best in writing your report.

12.3.1 Required Submissions

Two separate submissions are required for this report:

- **Submission 1** should contain the report itself, along with the specified sections and appendices.
  - Cover page with title (does not count towards the word limit)
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Method
  - Analysis
  - Discussion
  - References (does not count towards word limit)
  - Appendices (does not count towards word limit)
- **Submission 2** should contain the required information about the process of your analysis, using the template provided. Submission 2 does not count towards the word limit. Please note that Phase 6 is not included as this is what you include in your Analysis section
  - Phase 1 (Familiarisation)
  - Phase 2 (Doing Coding)
  - Phase 3 (Generating Initial Themes)
  - Phase 4 (Developing and Reviewing Themes)
  - Phase 5 (Refining, Defining and Naming Themes)

12.3.2 Submission 1: The Qualitative Report

12.3.2.1 General writing style

- Your writing should be clear, concise and easy to follow - remember that academic writing does not need to be complicated to be good. One tip is to use word to read your report back to you – sometimes it's easier to hear where a point may be overly complex or long and where you might want to cut it down.
- Maintain a neutral, academic tone throughout. Avoid a 'journalistic' tone, where you convince the reader based on using emotive language. Instead, show the reader why you think the way you do and the evidence base that underlies this.
- Discuss one idea/argument per paragraph. An excellent resource to help with this is the reverse outline.
- You should format your headings, in-text citations and references in APA 7th style.

- APA writing style encourages the use of active voice ("I coded the data" rather than "the data were coded") but if you feel more comfortable writing in passive voice, feel free to do so - just make sure to be consistent throughout and be careful not to make your writing overly complex.
- Tenses are not always fixed per se (as it depends on how a sentence is structured). However, generally, the following applies – past tense should be used when you have done something already (like your study). For example, we would usually see past tense in the Methods (unless doing a registered report) and the Analysis section. When talking about papers that are already published (in the Intro and Discussion), again these would typically be in past tense.
- You can use first person singular (I) or plural (we) in the report itself if you want to, but in the reflexivity section make sure to write in first person singular. This is because this is your reflection of your own positionality to the RQ and the data, and it's often very personal.

12.3.2.2 Title

The title should be included as part of the cover page. It should reflect the research question(s) and define your sample (e.g., UG students experience of…). Try to be specific - your title should include:

- Who
- What
- How

Examples:

- A Thematic Analysis *(how)* of the panic attack experiences *(what)* of primary aged children in inner city Schools in the UK *(who)*
- Barriers and enablers to modifying sleep behaviour *(what)* in adolescents and young adults *(who)*: A qualitative investigation *(how)*

12.3.2.3 Abstract (suggested word count: 100-150 words)

In an academic journal, the function of an abstract is to give readers a snapshot of the whole paper. They then use this to decide whether or not to read the full article. Therefore, you should make sure you cover all four main sections of your report, summarising them all succinctly.

Aim to summarise all sections of the report in 150 words, including; 1) what does the existing literature tell us about the topic 2) aim of the study 3) brief methodology, 4) approach to analysis , 5) main findings, and 6) key aspects of the discussion. Keep in mind that you are summarising your research for a non-expert and you want to "entice" them to read more.

Tips

- Start out by writing four sentences, each summarising one section of the report (introduction, methods, analysis, discussion). Now, look at the six sections above and see where you might need to add a bit of detail.
- One common mistake is to ignore the discussion, saying something like 'Findings are discussed in relation to existing research'. This doesn't tell us anything about what your overarching thoughts are about your findings and how they relate to the literature base.

12.3.2.4 Introduction (suggested word count 750-850 words)

Some activities to support you with writing your Analysis section can be found in Chapter 11.

The introduction should give readers enough background to understand your rationale for further research, whether your study is qualitative or quantitative. Provide a clear, critical review of the most relevant published research and highlight the key issues and debates in the field. Use these to build a logical argument for your study.

Follow the APA-style funnel structure: begin with a broad overview of the topic, then narrow the focus until you reach your specific rationale and research question(s).

Because your word count is limited, focus on recent and directly relevant studies—especially the latest qualitative research in this specific area. Show how your project builds on the most recent work to strengthen your rationale. Remember to cite all sources used, including government reports, websites, and media items.

A resource for helping you to develop evaluation in your introductions can be found at the start of Chapter 11.

You should end with a statement of what the aim of your study was, and the research question.

When reviewing previous studies, don't just describe them - evaluate them. Highlight their limitations, but only those your study can realistically address. Consider what the findings mean, note any conflicting results, and think about why they differ. This should naturally build toward a clear rationale for your own study.

Then, explain your study and clearly state your research question(s), ensuring they connect directly to the issues raised in your introduction.

In summary:

- Review and critically evaluate relevant theories and research.
- Justify your study by linking gaps or limitations in past work to your research questions.

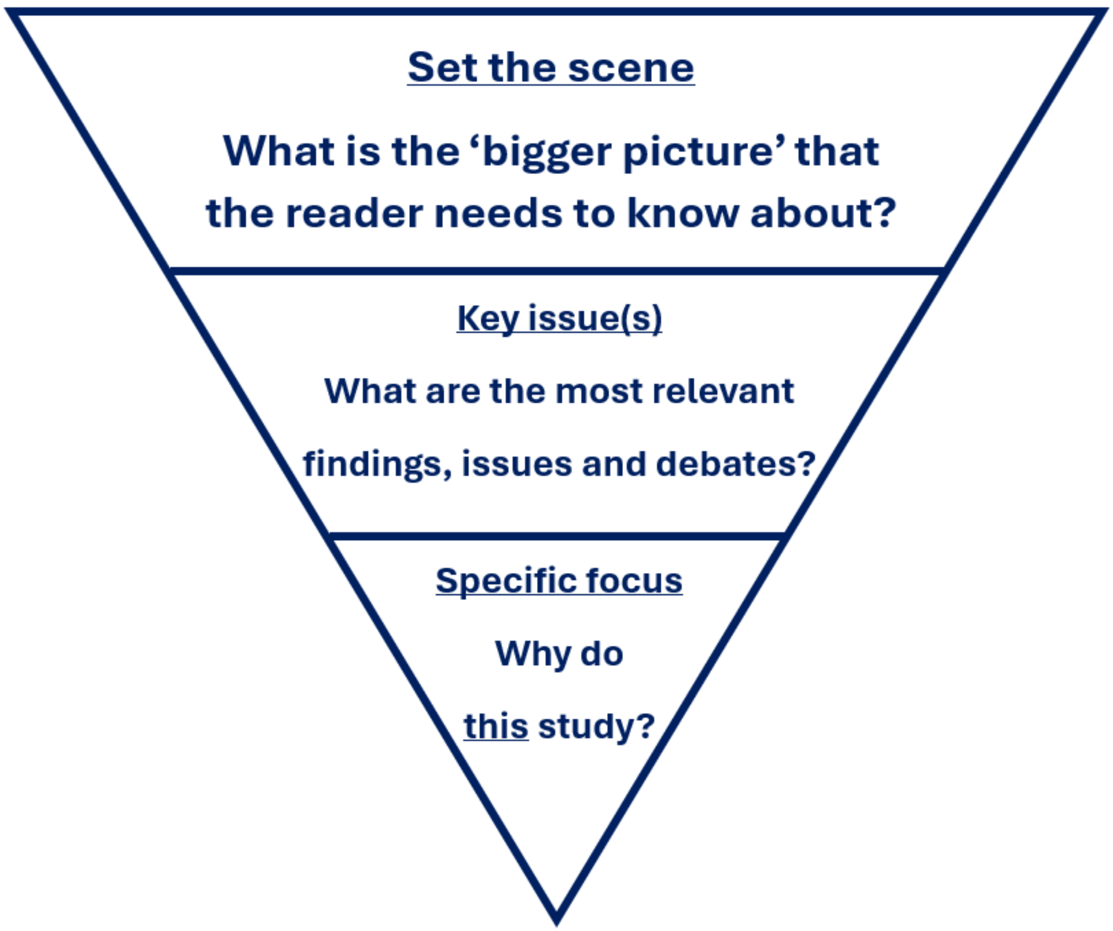


Figure 12.1: Broad-to-narrow structure of an introduction

- Clearly outline your main and subsidiary research questions, ensuring these are phrased in a way that aligns with a qualitative approach.

Remember: just like in a quantitative report, this section shows what has been done before and why your study is needed.

> Tips
>
> - In your rationale, remember to tell the reader why the current study (i.e. the topic and group of participants) is **important**.
> - If identifying limitations of existing research, make sure to pick something that you are able to address in your study. If you say that one issue is that heart rate wasn't gathered, but you don't do this in your study, this can be confusing for a reader.

12.3.2.5 Method (suggested word count 350-450 words)

The aim of the method section is to clearly report how your study was conducted – the reader should be able to re-run your research from the details provided. In this case, contextualise the original study that your secondary data are from, report details of the original data collection, explain your process of refining and selecting the data used for your project, and describe the qualitative analysis you used. True 'replication' is difficult due to the central role of the researcher in influencing some aspects of the research such as analysis. This is not an experiment.

Follow these subheadings for your method section for this report:

Secondary data

In this section you should describe the original study and give the reader context about their data collection. Understanding the specific context of each study is a key element of qualitative research, which is why it is really important for you to explain that in order for your secondary analysis to be reported openly.

What was the original study about? Who conducted it? Where are the data available? You should cite your chosen dataset in APA style (do not provide a link in text) - each dataset has this information on the UK data service page under the Citation and copyright section. How many interviews did they conduct, what was the methodology they used for the interviews (you should find this information on the UK Data Service page for your chosen data set)? Who were their participants? What were the participants asked about?

If you have demographic information about the participants on the UK Data Service Website, you may wish to include this, but don't worry if your chosen dataset doesn't provide this - we don't expect you to report any information that was not available to you.

Data selection

In this section you should describe your procedure for choosing your final data set. How many interviews did you choose? How did you choose the specific ones you decided to use for your analysis?

Ethics

The information you are able to provide in this section will depend on the information made available within the dataset. Some things you might want to comment on include: anonymisation procedures (e.g. has information been replaced or redacted), rapport building, information/consent/debrief, consent as a process. You will only be able to include information that has been made available in the dataset, so do not worry if you do not know a lot of detail.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research it is important to acknowledge the role of the researcher in interpretation of the data (Elliot et al., 1999).

This is where you question your own motives and attitudes in doing this project. Obviously we told you that you had to do it. But, what motivated you to choose the dataset you did? What assumptions did you hold prior to beginning the research? Had you considered issues around the topic previously? Did they match what the interviews say, or did you disagree with them? Did this affect which interviews you chose to include in your analysis? And if so, how did this impact on your analysis? Because different people would interpret the data differently, it is useful for you to expose your own attitudes at this point so that others can see how you have impacted on the analysis.

See Braun & Clarke (2013, pp36-37, 303-304) and activities around reflexivity. Reflexive analysis should be concise for this project, perhaps around 3-4 sentences. However, you will also have to include a reflexivity diary as a part of your appendices.

Data Analysis

In this section, explain:

- What analysis method you used and your theoretical approach (see the 'Thinking about theory' mini-lecture for a reminder).
- The stages of your qualitative analysis. Be clear and specific - qualitative work is sometimes criticised for being vague. Use recognised guidelines (e.g., Smith for IPA; Braun & Clarke for Reflexive Thematic Analysis).

When outlining the stages:

- Give a brief summary of the full process, linked to the relevant framework (e.g., RTA). Around three to four sentences total is enough for this length of report.
- You can keep some phases short (e.g., "familiarisation with the data (Phase 1); generating codes (Phase 2)…").
- Aim for transparency - explain what happens between coding and theme development.

- Describe the researcher as actively identifying themes, not waiting for themes to "emerge," which incorrectly suggests they are already there waiting to be found.

Tips

- In the methods section, try to be precise and succinct in your writing (this applies to the whole report, but is particularly important here). Think about what the reader needs to know and how to best communicate this.
- Common errors include inaccurate information (e.g. the wrong number of Phases in Braun & Clarke's framework) and a superficial reflexivity section.

12.3.2.6 Analysis (suggested word count: 750-900 words)

Some activities to support you with writing your Analysis section can be found in Chapter 11.

The analysis section is where you present the evidence you've collected. It works like a Results section in a quantitative report.

Your goal is to make the analysis transparent, showing clearly how your interpretations come from the transcripts. Use extracts from the transcripts to support all quotes and interpretations.

Guidelines

- Choose a maximum of two themes or one theme with two sub-themes to include in the Analysis section, even if you found more. You will not be able to go into enough depth if you present more themes than this, due to the word count restrictions.
- If you want to use parts of a quote, rather than the full quote (e.g. maybe you want to remove the middle sentence, which doesn't add anything), you can indicate you omitted something with ellipses.
- Never alter any of the words or phrasing that is used, even if you think you know what the participant was going to say. This would be as unacceptable as editing numbers in a quantitative analysis!
- Try to strike a balance between quotes and interpretation. We sometimes see lots of quotes with very little analysis or lots of analysis with very few quotes, both of which have problems.

! Generative AI and data

Do not, **under any circumstances**, put the transcripts or quotes from the transcripts into GenerativeAI (this includes CoPilot). This will not have been agreed as part of the original ethics and participants will not have consented for this use of the data.

Failing to follow these instructions puts you at risk of academic and research misconduct.

Structuring the Analysis section

- Start with a short paragraph summarising the main themes **without** using any quotes. This should not be too long - perhaps around a sentence or two.
- If you have two themes:
    - Present each theme using a sub-heading
    - Give the reader a brief overview of what the theme is. It is likely that you will have to select a few key points that encapsulate your theme, rather than describe everything in your theme in detail. For a dissertation, where you have more available word count, you will be able to cover more.
    - Once you've introduced the theme, tell the reader about what you found in your analysis of this theme. Make sure to incorporate quotes to support your analytical points.
- If you have one theme and two sub-themes:
    - Have sub-headings for the overall theme as well as the sub-themes.
    - Briefly explain the overarching theme and then how the sub-themes relate to the larger theme. Do not present quotes at this point.
    - Then, present each of the sub-themes in turn, under sub-headings. In each of these, tell the reader what you found in the analysis of your theme and incorporate quotes to support your analytical points.

Presenting Quotes

Use *long quotes* by placing them in a separate, centred indented block. *Short quotes* can be included within the sentence. Due to the word count, you are likely to be able to do a maximum of one or two longer quotes per theme or sub-theme.

You can find guidance on presenting participant quotes in APA format in the recommended resources. Although the word limit suggested here is 40 words, this is quite long and so we suggest taking it on a case by case basis (e.g. having a quote of 39 words within a sentence might be correct but also might be confusing to read). You can run anything past us if you are unsure.

We have also prepared an example of how to format quotes in APA style.

Going Beyond Paraphrasing

A strong analysis section will *analyse* the data, going beyond summary and paraphrasing. What do you add, as the analyst? You will have much more knowledge of the data, and it is your job to pass on that insight. If you paraphrase the data, the reader will be able to see this in the quotes, but the analysis then doesn't add anything extra.

! Important

Instead of telling the reader what was talked about, explain **what the things that were talked about reveal or suggest** about the phenomenon you are studying.

Avoid writing themes that are topic summaries, as these are at a descriptive level.

- A theme of "Stress and workload" is mainly descriptive. It tells us the topics that participants mentioned, but not why they matter or how they relate.
- A theme of "Stress is an unavoidable requirement of 'being a good student'" is interpretative. It goes further by explaining what stress *means* for the participants. For example, the data might show that students see stress as tied to their identity as students and that this is something that they expect, rather than something to avoid.

This kind of deeper interpretation goes beyond the superficial to show the reader what the data suggests, rather than just summarising it.

Tips

- There is no single "correct" interpretation, but you must show clearly how your interpretation is supported by the quotes you use.
- Go beyond describing the data—explain the underlying meaning.
- Choose quotes that directly support the point you are making; the connection should be obvious to the reader.
- Follow the guidelines: include the recommended number of themes/sub-themes, and balance quotations with your interpretation.

12.3.2.7 Discussion (suggested word count: 750-850 words)

Some activities to support you with developing evaluation in your Discussion section can be found in Chapter 11.

The Discussion is where you bring together your findings and consider these in light of the literature (and theory). It is also where you consider the wider importance of your findings, reflect on limitations and think about potential implications and future directions.

Start with a brief recap

- Remind the reader of the theme/s you report in the Findings and relate these to your Research Question.

Connect your findings to past research

Note: This should be the largest section within your Discussion.

- Here, compare your results with the studies and theories you mentioned in the Introduction, as well as any new studies/theories you want to incorporate.
  - Say whether your findings support or contradict those from the literature base. However, also go beyond this and tell us what this **means**, more broadly. Why might this be important?
  - Say whether your findings extend/challenge what is already known. If so, tell us what this means/why it is important, and back your points up with evidence.

> **!** Going beyond 'agreement/disagreement'
>
> It is important to go beyond simple agreement or disagreement, and interpret the data. The following is a 'not so great' example:
>
> - "Our theme showed that postgraduate students felt a lot of pressure to succeed, but they did not agree on what "success" actually meant. This is similar to Skye (2023) who said that postgraduates think success means getting good grades, although some thought it meant being a good group member or answering questions in class. Therefore, our results match Skye's findings."
>
> This is a stronger example:
>
> - "Our theme showed that postgraduate students feel strong pressure to 'succeed,' yet they hold different and sometimes conflicting ideas about what success actually means. This supports Skye's (2023) finding that, while many postgraduates focus on good grades, others define success through group contribution or speaking up in class. Our findings add to this by showing that it is even more complex, as students tend to hold multiple ideas of success at the same time, creating uncertainty about how to meet expectations. This shows that success is not a fixed standard but something students actively negotiate in response to academic norms and peer pressures. This emphasis on negotiation echoes Isla's (2025) findings that medical staff similarly construct their professional identities in relation to shifting expectations."
>
> In the second, the author goes into more depth and explains to the reader what the current findings add. They also then explain this by linking (through the observation that negotiation was key) to a relevant finding from a different field.

Discuss implications

- Explain any practical or theoretical implications of your findings. Remember to make these realistic and linked to your findings.
- Try to make these concrete suggestions, rather than vague statements.
- Remember to back these points up with evidence from the literature base.

Reflect on limitations

- In this length of report, we suggest picking a maximum of one or two limitations, so that you have the opportunity to develop some depth.
- Avoid limitations that are more suited to quantitative studies
  - sample size
  - lack of generalisability
- Think about limitations that are *relevant* instead
  - The kinds of experiences or voices not represented
  - What the research design prioritised or obscured
  - How the method of data collection might have shaped interpretation
- As with the other sections, the limitations section is stronger when you clearly link to the evidence base.

Suggest future research

- Show what you would do differently next time and why. Propose ideas for studies that naturally follow from your findings.
- Link to the literature base to support your points.

Tips

- Link to evidence in support of the points you are making throughout the whole Discussion section (including limitations, implications and future directions).
- Pick limitations that are relevant to qualitative research.
- It's okay to bring in new literature into the Discussion, but try to also bring back key studies/theories that you introduced earlier on in the report.

12.3.2.8 Recap of word count for each section of the report

- **Abstract**: 100-150 words
- **Introduction**: 700-800 words
- **Method**: 350-450 words
- **Analysis**: 750-900 words
- **Discussion**: 750-850 words

We understand this can feel like a lot to fit into the report, but it's a good chance to practise writing concisely. It's okay to go slightly outside these guidelines, but try not to deviate too much.

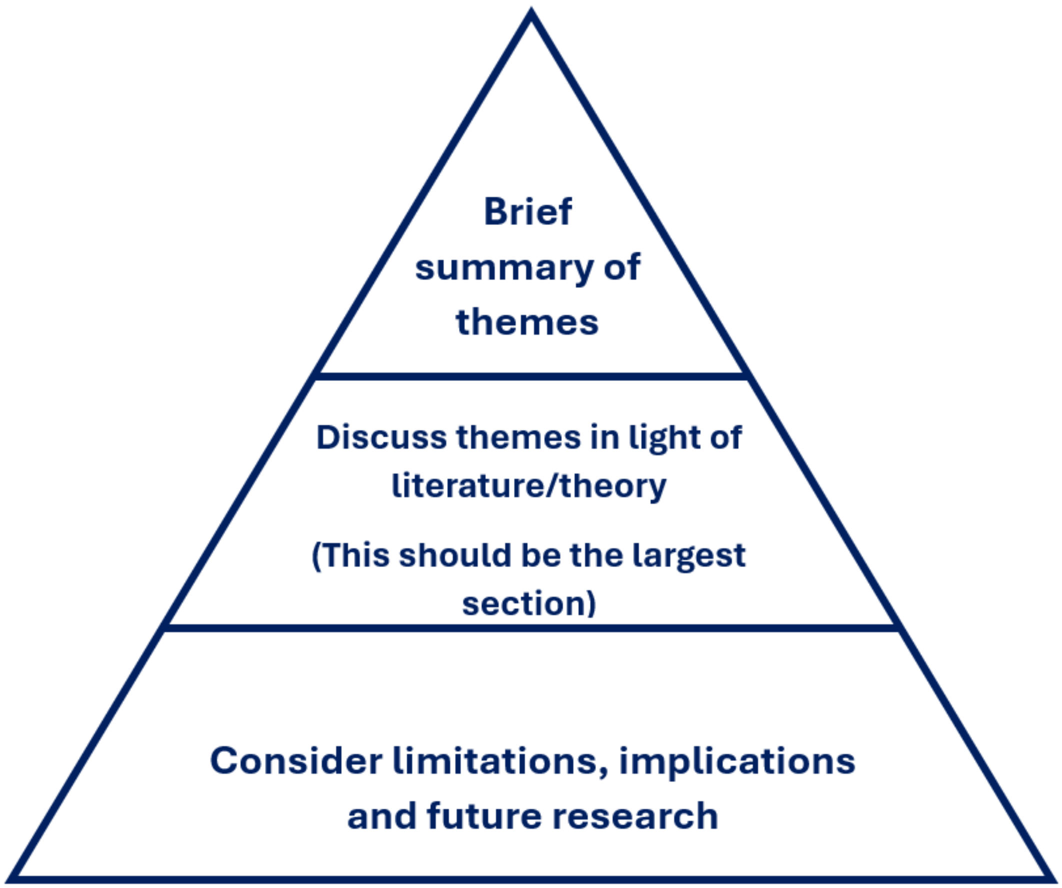


Figure 12.2: Narrow-to-broad structure of a discussion

A common mistake is making the abstract or method section longer than recommended, which then affects the quality of the other sections.

If you're struggling with the word count, feel free to drop into office hours. We can't give general feedback, but you're welcome to ask specific questions about how you might condense your report.

12.3.2.9 References

Citations in the main body of the text and references in the reference list are structured in exactly the same way as in a quantitative report, using APA 7th style.

12.3.2.10 Appendices

The appendices can often hold a lot of information. In the qualitative report we ask you to include the following in the appendices of the report:

- **Required**: A list of the interviews you have chosen and a link to the original dataset (do not include the transcripts themselves)
- **Required**: A reflexivity diary that you have developed over the course of completing your analysis. Please use the template linked here to complete your diary.
- **Only if available**: You might have a list of the interview questions (if easily obtained from your transcripts or study documentation on UK data service)
- There may be other appendices you choose to include. If in doubt, please ask and we will do our best to help.

12.3.3 Submission 2: Step-by-step Evidence of the Analysis Process

This year, we are asking that all students in RM2 complete two separate submissions for their qualitative report.

- Submission 1 = full report with cover sheet and appendices
- Submission 2 = step-by-step evidence of your Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Submission 2 will be formally assessed through the fourth ILO in 'Evaluation'.

The reasons for this requirement are three-fold:

- **To support your learning of rigorous qualitative research skills.**

  Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) relies on transparency, reflexivity, and a clear audit trail of decisions. By documenting each step, you gain a deeper understanding of how qualitative analysis works and build skills that are essential for doing high-quality research.

- **To ensure that your submitted work reflects your own analytic thinking.**

  We know that generative AI tools are now widely accessible, and while they can be useful for support, they cannot replace the reflective, interpretive, and creative thinking at the heart of RTA. Taking the process step-by-step helps you to demonstrate your genuine engagement with the data and protects the integrity of your work.

- **To help you experience RTA as a process, not just a product.**

  Good RTA is not about producing a set of themes; it is about the journey you take to get there. Keeping a portfolio helps you slow down, think critically, and make your analytic decisions visible. This will lead to richer insights and a stronger final analysis.

In short, we hope that this requirement for keeping a transparent record of your analytic journey will help you produce stronger work and deepen your understanding of qualitative research.

The template can be found here

Answers to some questions

- **What advice do you have for completing this process?** Our main piece of advice is to work on the reflexivity diary (part of the appendices) and the 'evidencing the process' template *while you are working on the project*. You should be completing these steps anyway as part of the analysis, so it should be a case of logging the evidence as you go. If, however, you do not complete it as you go along, this would make it very difficult to include properly at the last minute.
- **Can I use NVivo?** For this assignment, no. We plan to develop guidance that considers how students can best use NVivo in the age of GenAI, but this will take some time to develop properly.
- **I developed three themes, but can only report two in the qual report itself: What do I do?** It probably makes sense to include all of the information up until the end of Phase 4, as often the themes are intermingled together. However, for the Phase 5 part (naming and defining the themes), it is up to you: you can include all of your themes or you can include only those that are in the report.

Below, we have prepared some guidance for each section to help you.

12.3.3.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation

> **!** Phase 1: What is asked for?
>
> In the template, we ask for your familiarisation notes, when you read through each transcript.

Guidelines for Phase 1

Familiarity notes are brief reflections written while reading and re-reading the data. They are often messy and very personal and are not 'right' or 'wrong'.

They tend to capture:

- First impressions
- What stands out
- What seems confusing or unusual
- Emotional reactions
- Questions or curiosities
- Early ideas about what the participant might be "doing" with their words
- Noticing of tone, contradictions, or patterns

Some things you might note down:

- What immediately grabs your attention?
- How do you feel in response to what you're reading?
- What do you think the participant is trying to express? Why do you think this?
- Are any ideas or experiences repeated?
- Do they say things that don't fit together?
- What are you curious about? What would you ask them if you could?
- Anything about their background that shapes how you read this?
- How do your assumptions/interests shape what seems important?

> Example
>
> This is a short example of a familiarisation note, to give you a sense of what might be expected.
> *"My first impression is that Participant 1 feels overwhelmed but also quite capable, which creates an interesting tension. Words like 'pressure', 'everyone watching', and 'expectations' make me think they're under a lot of stress. I notice I feel a bit anxious reading this - maybe because I've had similar experiences. I'm also interested in their comment about 'putting on a front' at work. It makes me wonder why they feel they can't be their real self in that situation."*
> This familiarity note captures initial impressions, points to specific language that shaped

those impressions, and reflects openly on personal reactions while reading. It also highlights moments that stood out and raises gentle questions, showing curiosity rather than early analysis.

12.3.3.2 Phase 2: Developing Codes

! Phase 2: What is asked for?

In the template, we ask for you to provide a table with all of your codes in it.

Guidelines for Phase 2

When coding, think about the following:

- Work through your data section by section, thinking about what feels meaningful, interesting or like there is a pattern
- Create short labels (codes) that capture the essence of what each highlighted section is *doing*, *saying*, or *representing*
- Remember that you can be flexible with the coding process. You can create as many codes as you need, and you can merge or rename them later. This allows you to remain responsive as your coding develops over the dataset.
- Try to keep your coding active and interpretive, focusing on meaning instead of counting how often something appears.
- If you are unsure whether to code something or not, err on the side of caution and include it. This will help you avoid overlooking sections that seem contradictory, subtle, or hard to interpret
- Keep a note of your reflections in your reflexivity diary as you code, which will help in later phases.

12.3.3.3 Phase 3: Generating initial themes

! Phase 3: What is asked for?

In the template, we ask you to a) tell us about your initial themes and/or subthemes, b) tell us the process of how you developed these, and c) tell us about the initial patterns you observed.

In this section, you start to group together your codes into themes. Some parts might come together nicely and others might feel more difficult to put into groups. This is part of the process and nothing to worry about!

Guidelines for Phase 3

When forming your initial themes, think about the following:

- Look across all your codes and identify broader meaning-based patterns.
- Group together codes that seem related, connected, or part of a shared story.
- Notice similarities, differences, tensions, and recurring ideas across your coded data. Sometimes you can have themes that look contradictory on the surface, but there is shared meaning underneath.
- Create rough theme names that capture the central idea or organising concept in each cluster.
- Write a short description of what each initial theme is about and why it matters.
- Write reflections about how you developed the theme (e.g., repeated emotions, shared experiences, contradictions you observed).
- Remember these are **initial** themes - this is not the final version and they can change, merge, or be dropped in later phases.

12.3.3.4 Phase 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes

> ❗ Phase 4: What is asked for?
>
> In the template, we ask for you to provide details of how your themes changed from the initial themes you identified in Phase 3.

In this section, this is where you really think about what your themes **mean**, and how they relate to each other. There is often some back-and-forth during this part of the process, and students often end up going back to Phase 3 (or even 2).

Guidelines for Phase 4

- Revisit the coded extracts for each theme and check whether they *truly* fit together and reflect a coherent idea.
- Look for any extracts that feel out of place, unclear, or better suited to a different theme — or that suggest a new theme.
- Refine each theme's focus by clarifying its central organising concept: what is the core meaning holding this theme together?
- Check whether themes are too broad, too narrow, overlapping, or repetitive, and adjust by splitting, combining, or renaming.
- Review themes against the *full dataset* to ensure they capture important patterns across the data, not just isolated points.
- Consider whether any parts of the dataset have been overlooked or require revisiting earlier phases of coding or theme development.

- Make notes about how your themes changed (e.g., merged, refined, expanded) and why these changes improved the analysis.
- Ensure each theme tells a meaningful, distinct part of the overall story you are constructing about the data.

Example

This is a short example of how a researcher might change themes from Phase 3 to Phase 4, to give you a sense of what might be expected.
Initial Theme (Phase 3): "Feeling Under Pressure"

- This theme was developed from a cluster of codes including "pressure to perform", "fear of being judged", and "trying to keep up".
- It seemed that participants were describing feeling stressed and overwhelmed by expectations.

Refinement Process (Phase 4)

- When reviewing coded extracts, I noticed that some excerpts were more about *external expectations* (e.g., others judging them), while others were about *internal expectations* (e.g., pushing themselves).
- This suggested that this initial theme was too broad, and actually captured two different patterns, so I split the theme into two themes.
- I then changed the names to better reflect the differences between these themes.

Refined Themes (Phase 4): Theme 1: "Navigating Others' Judgements" and Theme 2: "Holding Myself to High Standards"

1. "Navigating Others' Judgements"

- This theme captures experiences of being watched, evaluated, or compared to others, reflecting a concern about how others perceive the participant.

2. "Holding Myself to High Standards"

- This theme reflects participants' self-imposed pressure, perfectionism, and high standards.

12.3.3.5 Phase 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

> **!** Phase 5: What is asked for?
>
> In the template, we ask to a) tell us how you came up with your theme names and b) provide a definition for your theme/s.

In this section, this is where you aim to clearly articulate what each theme is about, define its boundaries, and give it a meaningful name that captures its central organising concept.

Guidelines

- Revisit each theme and identify its central organising concept (the key idea that holds the theme together).
- Write a clear explanation of what each theme is about, focusing on the shared meaning across the extracts, not just the topic.
- Know the boundaries of the theme - what belongs in it and what does not? One suggestion is to imagine you are telling someone who doesn't know your research about your theme. What would you include in such a summary?
- Check that each theme is distinct from the others and not overlapping, repetitive, or too similar in focus.
- Refine the name of the theme so it captures its core meaning in a concise, engaging, and conceptually clear way. Avoid one word theme names or names that are very descriptive.
- Write a brief description of how each theme contributes to your overall analysis.
- Ensure each theme connects back to your research question and supports the analytical narrative you are building.

12.3.3.6 Coded transcripts

Here, we ask that you provide all of your transcripts that have been coded (we advise two or three, with a max of four if doing the couples dataset). If you have coded the transcripts multiple times, please only include one set of transcripts.

> **!** Coded transcripts: What is asked for?
>
> In the template, we ask for you to provide all of your coded transcripts. These should either be commented in Word or scans of physical copies.

13 Frequently Asked Questions

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13.1 General Project questions

How do the portfolio and qualitative report work together - should we focus on one before looking at the other? The qualitative portfolio is designed to support you in developing skills that would be important for actually running qualitative studies (e.g. reflexivity, developing questions, awareness of ethics, awareness of good/bad practice for data collection). The report is designed to support you in developing your data analysis skills and then writing up this information into a report.

Re. the timescales - we would advise that you start working (or at least thinking about) the qualitative report before your qualitative portfolio is handed in. However, we realise everyone is different and prefer to work in different ways. We have developed a timeline for the summative assessment with suggested milestones, although you should revise these deadlines to find something that works for you.

13.2 Qualitative portfolio questions

13.2.1 General portfolio questions

Where can I find information about the qualitative portfolio? You can find information about the portfolio in the template, the guidelines, the AIS and the video Wil recorded. You can access the materials in chapter 10 of this book.

What is the word count for each section? This is in the template, but it can be broken down as follows: Activity 1a (no word limit for the six questions), Activity 1b (250 words), Activity 2 (250 words), Activity 3 (500 words).

In the answers, should we use or avoid acronyms such as BPS and GDPR? Usually in your writing you should avoid unnecessary abbreviations unless they are really commonly used, as this makes it harder for the reader to follow your writing. A good general rule of thumb is not to come up with any abbreviations yourself. These two are very common for the context of your assignment so you can use them (this will also help with the word count which is very limited here).

Do we need to set out an introduction and concluding summary in our responses to each of the sections? You don't need this - you can dive straight in :)

Is it okay for us to take what a study says at face value (i.e. the study says x, which backs up the point)? Or do we have to be critical about the study? Yes, this is fine - we expect you to use the studies to support the points you are making, rather than critically interrogating how well the study supports the claim. It would not really be possible to do the latter within the word count. This assessment is a bit different to when you are writing a report, for example, where you'd want to show how you are building on the existing literature (to help support your rationale)

I can't figure out how to cite the BPS code; examples online are both "BPS,2021" and "Oates et al., 2021" Cite it as BPS.

Is it okay to answer the questions or do we have to make a unique contribution (as you do in an essay or a report)? Just doing what you are asked is fine. This is not the same type of assessment as a report or essay as it is focusing on skills needed to run a project, so it will be assessing different things.

Should I delete the included instructions from the template document so it's just the headings for each section? Either keeping them or deleting them is fine - whichever you prefer.

Can I use guidelines and and strategies for qualitative research from fields other than psychology? Yes, perfectly fine to use these guidelines - you don't have to stick to Psychology. Just make sure that the guidelines apply to the type of research methodology/RQ you are discussing.

Is slight variability in word count between the sections allowed as long as the final product is less than 1000? Yes, there is slight variability allowed - it is overall 1000 but you can change the distribution that is suggested slightly (however, try not to change by more than 30-40 words so you provide the right amount of detail for each section).

13.2.2 Task 1: Qualitative questions & reflection

Do the qualitative questions we submit also need referencing? No, you don't need citations for section 1A. But make sure to support your reflection with evidence in 1B.

Is it acceptable to refer to 'the research question' without having to write it out in task 1B? Yes - you don't need to repeat it as the word count is very limited here.

To what extent can we refine the sample? The RQ refers to 'students', but could we specify that further by limiting it to only students who have / not sought

out mental health support? Yes, if you want to limit it further, this is fine - we kept it somewhat flexible on purpose so you have a bit of freedom with this.

What sort of evidence is relevant in a reflection? Is it related to the topic (i.e. of mental health) or is it more about the anticipated problems / other researchers protocol in similar research? Or a bit of both? Should we avoid trying to justify our choices in the reflection, or is that a good thing to do? I think it would make sense if it's more related to methods rather than the topic choice - would be quite good to justify your choices in the reflection.

Would it be a good idea to include a warm up question/ice breaker and a closing question in our six questions? For the purposes of this assessment, we would suggest just sticking to the six main questions (i.e. not using up two of these for a warm up/exit question). This is because we ask for a limited number, and that way we can keep things consistent across the whole class. One thing you might want to consider is your placement of questions (i.e. the order in which you would ask them).

What is the difference between an interview and a qualitative survey? Interview is where the researcher is one-to-one with a participant and asks them questions. Qualitative survey is a qualitative questionnaire that is often sent to participants online and they fill it out in writing.

How does (evidence based) reflection differ (if at all) from (evidence based) writing that we have been doing so far for our assignments? It doesn't really - we want you to look at the evidence and back up your ideas with relevant sources. The portfolio materials have some probes for your reflection. In the ethics task you should also use the BPS code of ethics and refer to that as well.

For activity 1, do we would need to pick a specific topic area (from the evidence base) to explore in more depth in order to frame our questions? The overall topic and research question is given to you in the materials, and then you need to come up with focus group/interview/qualitative survey questions that you would ask the participants to investigate the research question

Should we mark some of the questions as priority with a star, to note the ones that we would ask first if time was running short in the focus group? You can asterisk the ones you deem most important if you want to, but there is no requirement to do so either (so basically, whichever you prefer)

Can we include prompts underneath some of the questions? You can if you want, but we ask you to stick to a maximum of one prompt per question if you do this (and that it's really clear for the reader what the main question is and what the prompt is)

Is there scope to include visual prompts in our questions? Theoretically yes, although we've never seen this asked before so wouldn't know what a visual prompt would look like. If you want to include this, it might be worth contacting Ashley / Wil to show them an example.

What should we focus our reflection on? About half of the word count in our reflection is currently taken up by an evidence-based discussion of why we opted for the FG format over the interview as this really guided how we constructed the questions thereafter. I just want to know if such a focus is correct or if you're looking for discussion to centre more around a specific question or two that we chose?

There is no one correct way to structure the reflection. We are interested in how you found the experience and why you made the decisions that you did in constructing your list of questions. We often see reflections on why people chose a particular approach for their questions too (e.g. focus group over interview/survey).

You have advised that we choose 1 or 2 issues and go into their depth when answering the questions on ethics and the terrible FG. What do you recommend we do for the reflections on the questions in task 1? Do we for instance speak about why we chose a specific approach over the other? Why we chose these specific questions? Challenges we faced etc. Or do we combine everything? Now, we have 250 words of a general reflection on FGs, guideline designing on the topic under discussion, challenges we faced, and what we couldn't get with citations of course. I'm wondering if we should be more focused and try to answer only 1 point? Basically, we don't specify what you can and can't reflect on, so as long as it's relevant (which this is), then you have some flexibility :) It is a very open question and we are anticipating lots of different ways of answering this one in particular. The main thing is to follow the guidelines that have been given and to look at the ILOs, to see how well you think your response is meeting them

Is it appropriate to briefly describe our own expertise and experiences, and how they've informed our decisions? Would this count as reflexivity and would you like to see evidence of reflexivity? Or would you rather we didn't talk about ourselves directly? Yes, this would be completely appropriate to discuss as part of reflexivity. It's fine to discuss yourselves directly (but it is not the only way to do this task). You would be reflecting on why you made the choices you did and would be demonstrating what experiences you have that went into those. Be mindful to make this evidence-based too!

We have included a short rationale on why we chose a focus group which is placed before the six questions. Will this short paragraph be included within the word count for the whole portfolio or will it not count as part of the 1000 words? A rationale (if you choose to include it) should be in 1b. The only thing not included in the word count within the activities themselves is the actual questions of Activity 1a

Do prompts/probes have to be phrased as a question or can they be more of a statement? They will usually be framed as a question but it is fine to write them as a statement for this assignment if you prefer.

Do we need to define terms such as open-ended questions? No, there isn't space for this within the word count for this particular assignment

If we're including our group member's experiences for reflexivity, should we name them, or just refer to them as 'group member'? You can either use initials or "group member", either one would be fine

Within the questions we are setting for our group project - would it be appropriate to name "University of Glasgow" for instance or would it be best to keep to just "University" in general? We would suggest just sticking to University, rather than specifying the University of Glasgow in particular.

is it OK to assume that the participants work in the same university as its important for a point we've made in the moderating? Yes, this is fine :)

13.2.3 Task 2: Ethics

Should we connect our answer to Question 2 to what we did for Q1? No, there is no expectation that Activity 2 is linked to Activity 1 (although Activites 1a and 1b need to be linked to each other).

Can you tell us where people tend to go most wrong in this particular question? Sometimes, groups will focus more on ethical issues that are relevant for quantitative research, or research in general, rather than specifically thinking about qualitative research. This is something that is best avoided as it doesn't answer the question that is set.

13.2.4 Task 3: Focus group gone wrong

For focus group, do we have to back the issue with specific observations from the video? E.g @ 4.05min X did what, which is an issue because... No, this would likely take up too many words.

Is there a preference for either moderator or facilitator? No, these are interchangeable and either is fine

Are we to only quote peer reviewed literature in support of our argument, or can we quote for example from the Braun and Clarke book? No, it's fine to cite Braun & Clarke and there might also be guides/opinion pieces etc. - these would also be fine to use in support. Also, it's fine to use older evidence too - we do realise there's unlikely to be lots of 2022/2023 papers out there on how to do a focus group! We have also included some additional papers on the reading list (under Thinking about the focus group) to give a bit of a start (although please note we haven't had time to read these...we've skimmed through)

We have identified the point we want to talk about. For example, it is about the moderator's part. Should we focus on the moderator's issue in general or pick a couple of specific examples of bad moderating and write about them in depth? Because the word count is limited, it isn't apparent what strategy to pursue. Either is fine to be honest. You could pick moderating as one issue and then another one. Or you could focus on two separate parts of moderation. My main suggestion would be to pick an approach that allows you to go into depth on the issue, explaining why it is a problem, what could be improved etc.

I'm struggling with how to approach the focus group task- do you have any examples excellent or 'A' standard work? We don't provide exemplars, because this assessment is specific so it would be really hard to do that without giving out the answers. In terms of what the focus group task is asking, please make sure you read the ILOs for this assessment that can be found on the AIS document. The only ILO specific for the FG task is:

Correctly identify TWO or THREE issues present in the focus group, explain why they are problematic, and discuss possible improvements (#3: Focus group), which means that you should identify what is wrong in how the focus group is conducted (this is mostly based on what the moderator is/isn't doing), explain why these things are not good when you are conducting a FG, and explain how they could approach this instead.

To meet the other ILOs for this task, you should make sure you write clearly and concisely and demonstrate evaluation in your answer (this is an ILO for all your assessments you have done to date and means that you need to use evidence to build your arguments and go beyond description). For this task evaluation should include you explaining why your chosen issues are bad practice when conducting a focus group, and citing some evidence (this will mostly be methodological in nature) to back up your answer.

For the focus group task, do we need to include quotes from the transcript when referring to the issues? No, we would advise that you don't do this, as it will take up a lot of the (very limited!) word count. Instead of quoting, just say what the participant/facilitator did that you think explains the issue you have identified.

When I'm evaluating a study, do you want me to criticise it? Do you want me to talk about the methodology? For this assessment, we aren't really looking for you to criticise the studies that you are using - for example, for the focus group task, it's more about explaining why it's a bad thing that the moderator is doing and then using some evidence to back that up (e.g. some guidance for how to run a focus group or if there's a paper saying what you might want to do to make your participants feel more comfortable). Here, it's not about saying 'here's this study, it had x participants' - that is more for the report, where you are building a rationale.

Would a good structure be: x happened, x is bad for y reason, z should be done instead (with studies to back up)? There are different ways that you can structure it but the above example would be fine. The main thing is that you are covering what we ask of you in the guidance and the ILOs.

Should we include timestamps of when something happened in the video? No, this is not necessary to include - just telling us what you've identified will be fine

A lot of the literature is pretty old. What should I do? We are aware that some of the literature is older, and it's completely fine to use this. It's not the same type of assessment as essays/reports etc., and lot of the guidance is from the 90s or so.

Do we refer to the participants in the terrible video by their names eg: Ashley, Gaby? Or we call them participant 1, 2, 3, or the moderator (or Wilhelmina) did this with a participant, and that with another participant? I think generally I would say 'a participant' etc. as it depersonalises it. However, you do have the names there as they were on the video and - as we haven't given any guidance specifically on this - it won't affect the marking in any way if you use our names.

13.3 Qualitative report questions

13.3.1 General report questions

Will there be detailed guidance about each section of the qual report? Yes, we have a guidance in this book in the qualitative report section in chapter 12, which will cover the key points to cover in the report.

Is our report written in a specific style, e.g. IPA, thematic analysis etc? You will use thematic analysis to analyse your data. We covered this in detail in the lectures in semester 1, and we will also have activities to support this in semester 2.

How many interviews should we select for our report? We ask that you choose a maximum of three interviews to analyse (less than this is fine if you have enough data within your chosen interviews). If you are working with the relationships dataset, you can do two couples (four interviews) if you wish to.

I'm not sure what all the different tasks are for the report - where can we find this information? We haven't shared an explicit task list for the report and one reason for that is because RM2 is purposefully designed to get you to work a bit more independently in preparation for the dissertation.

Key stages are as follows:

- Familiarise yourself with what is expected for the report assignment have a look at the data and decide which dataset you want to work with
- Look at the data in more detail - which interviews will you select?
- Look at relevant literature and start to think about your RQ think about the rationale for the study
- Conduct your Thematic Analysis
- Write up the study as a full research report (which will be similar to your RM1 report).

For the report, I am unclear on the criteria for choosing transcripts. I have an approximate idea of a RQ and looking at the transcripts they could be broadly grouped into 2 sets relating to how the participant responds to the questions. Is the intention to choose transcripts that have a consistent thread or that cover a diverse range of views? With only 3 transcripts I'm not sure if it should be based on commonalities or if this is kind of cherry picking? I would say it's about choosing transcripts that you will be able to analyse and are relevant to the specific research question that you have. So, it would make sense to pick transcripts that are relevant (i.e. they cover the issue you are interested in). They may or may not have the same perspective - I think either would be okay to be honest. Sometimes, it can be useful to have different views as you can then think about why (which can be interesting in terms of evaluation of your themes) and it's also fine to have more consistent views too.

Can I do a different analysis and not TA? For the RM2 project we unfortunately only have assessment guidance and support for doing a thematic analysis (Braun &Clarke's version) and we currently are unable to expand that to different type of analyses - this is because it's an introductory qualitative course so the same way as in RM1 you were asked to do a specific analysis on the data, we would like you to stick with TA for the individual report.

What voice should I write in? Should my reflexivity be written in first person? APA style encourages the use of active voice instead of passive voice ("I did" instead of "it was done"). You can use either but make sure to be consistent and don't make your sentences overly complicated. For reflexivity, you should definitely use "I", because it is about your own reflection in regards to the RQ and the data

Should I be writing my report as though I designed and conducted the interviews etc myself? You should not write it as if you collected the data - you should write it as a secondary data analysis.

I've found published papers that are using the same dataset and I'm worried that my research is the exact same/doesn't add anything new? I feel that I should mention these original reports when I'm setting my study in the wider literature, but I'm not sure how then to argue that my study is adding anything new if I acknowledge these reports - what should I do? The chances of your RQ and all other parameters of the study being identical are not very high; if your RQ is worded exactly the same as a published paper, you may wish to tweak it a little bit to focus on a more specific aspect of the data, so you can explain in the introduction how it adds to existing literature. Also look out for what kind of analysis they did - then you can discuss why TA might be better suited for your RQ/the type of data you have. What subsample of interviews did they use and is yours different? If so, why? It doesn't need to be an entirely different thing to what is already published; good science is built in incremental steps, so think about what are the things that are different in your study to the published papers, and how that adds to what we already know

If my report is based on an understudied population with a limited research base, should it be introduced as exploratory research? It could be but it doesn't have to be. It's a bit different in qual as you don't have confirmation vs. exploratory in the same was as with quant. It is likely to be exploratory by nature though, as you are exploring people's views

13.3.2 Research questions

Do you have any tips for how to arrive at your research question for the qualitative report? This book has a section on developing RQs - work through those activities first. I would probably have a look over some of the datasets and decide what you'd like to focus on in terms of topic. Then I'd think about what kind of information you get from them (e.g. is it people's opinions/experiences/beliefs etc.) and what you'd be interested in looking at specifically.

Should our questions be broad enough so we can use the whole transcripts or should we narrow them to focus on specfic areas? I think an obvious example to illustrate what I mean would be on the Life limiting transcripts and then having a question of something like "experiences of animals on wellbeing etc" but that would then heavily focus the content of the analysis on one of the sub areas of the transcript and a lot (but not all) might be irrelevant? Perfectly fine to narrow them to focus on specific areas, but with this I would say make sure that you have enough data about your specific RQ to be able to analyse it. You don't have to use the whole transcript by any means - completely fine to use subsections. It's possible to revise your RQ in thematic analysis, so - if you were unsure - you could start off broader and then could make it a bit more specific down the line. There is the caveat that this would affect your intro, as you build towards why you've chosen this research question in your rationale.

Can we post more than one RQ on the padlet if we're not sure what route to go down? You can post a maximum of two RQs on the padlet to get feedback on them. If you have more, please drop into office hours with these.

Does the research question have to be tailored towards one of the questions asked in the interview or can it be broader? It's probably better to be broader - generally, themes will tend to be broader than a single question that is asked and it might be a little on the specific side

13.3.3 Introduction & Discussion

Should we include a mini paragraph at the start of the introduction summarising the research question at the end? We would recommend to avoid it for this specific assignment, as this might make it difficult for you to have a broad-to-narrow structure and could cause unnecessary repetition.

In the discussion section, can we refer to the data (e.g. the participants) or if that is too detailed for this section?

Two of the interviewees I have picked agree on something whilst the other disagrees so was going to specifically refer to this. Or should I be picking up the broader theme that came out in the discussion section and don't need to reference the specific point I am referring to? In the discussion you should focus on the themes and discuss them in relation to existing literature/future literature instead of focusing on individual comments from your participants (these you should analyse in the analysis section). If you think back to quant, you are not talking about the specific numbers in the discussion but instead focus on what the findings mean and how they build on existing literature. Sometimes in quali literature you see papers that have a sort of combined analysis and discussion section, in which case they might combine individual quotes and existing literature, but for this assignment we are asking you to separate them to two different sections for clarity and to make it a bit simpler for you to structure.

Do limitations/future directions need to be separate sections? They don't need to be two separate paragraphs - often what is a limitation to a study can logically be addressed in the next study.

13.3.4 Method

How to choose my theoretical framework and where does it go?

I take it that we are meant to indicate if we are using a constructionist or realist/experientialist framework for the analysis. Are we free to choose this or are there any recommendations? I would assume that focusing on semantic themes is more doable given the limited word count? Also, where would we state this? In the methods section or at the start of the analysis? It would be good to explain which theoretical perspective you are coming from, yes. It's important to take the word limit into account, so it could well be the case that focusing at a semantic level will be more doable - the key thing in your analysis is that you try to go beyond description, and develop a narrative. If you include details about the framework, this should be done in the Methods section, rather than at the start of the analysis.

Is there an easy guide to working out what theoretical approach you are using? I understand the difference between realism, social constructionism etc in theory but I can't work out how to apply it to my work. I kind of think it could be any of them so I think I'm missing something! It's more about thinking about your own perspective (rather than the dataset), as you are correct - any of the different approaches could be applied to the dataset. You could focus on what type of knowledge you are looking for, or instead, think about epistemology/ontology (or both!). It's sometimes easier to think about the type of knowledge you want to obtain - if it is knowing more about people's experiences, and how they describe their world, then that would be about seeking out phenomenological knowledge. If it is more in terms of uncovering something concrete that happens in the world (i.e. a truth) then it would be more realist that you are looking for. If you have questions about the theoretical approach specifically, feel free to pop into any of Ashley's office hours for a chat

Also can we draw upon our personal experiences in the report?

I'm looking at the LGBT+ dataset and also work in an NHS trust; I've seen some transphobic actions happen at work and was wondering if this is appropriate to talk about in the report if appropriate for the RQ Yes, there is a section for reflexivity in the methods section, where you should reflect on your experiences and how you felt about the topic/your experiences. You can also expand on it a bit in the discussion if you want.

How much of the reflexive diary can I include in the method report section? You can use your reflexive diary (included as an appendix) to help you write the reflexivity section, but don't directly copy paste it in the main body of your report - the reflexivity section under methods is much shorter than your full diary.

Are there good examples we can have a look at for reference in terms of reflexivity?

I'm looking through the list of examples studies you have included using thematic analysis, and I don't think they include any form of reflexivity at least not in the method section, or am I missing something? Or would this be done during analysis? Here are some resources to help, but they are not so much examples of reflexivity sections within papers and - instead - are more about giving guidance. Here are some links to start you off:

- Barrett et al (2020): How to…be reflexive when conducting qualitative research
- McLaughlan et al (2012): Phenomenological analysis of patient experiences of medical student teaching encounters (they embedded reflexivity within the 'Analysis' section of the methods
- Blog by Jacqui Burne: https://nzareblog.wordpress.com/2017/11/28/self-reflexivity/
- Byrne (2022) A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis
- Examples of reflective commentary from online resources from 'Reflexive Thematic
- Analysis' (2022) by Braun & Clarke: https://study.sagepub.com/thematicanalysis/student-resources/chapter-3/understanding-the-process (this website has a lot of really useful resources - the book is available through the library)

Are we meant to be using literature to support our reflexivity like we did for the group project reflection? You don't need to do this - reflexivity for a specific research project is more about thinking about your own positionality and how that might have affected the way you approached your data so it doesn't need to be supported with evidence.

Do we need to report the specific questions that we used to extract our results? I mean of course I read the full 3 interviews, however my topic was very specific and it was located in two specific questions in the interviews. Do I need to report that? Furthermore do I need to report all the questions of the interview anyways? I see all the qualitative studies report the full set of the questions. You can add them as an appendix but you don't need to list them all in the methods section; there you can just describe generally what kind of questions they were asked.

13.3.5 Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2013) a good analysis section will link back to relevant research previously done on the topic (i.e citations to link it to the wider literature) however, I would presume that this will be better suited to the discussion section of our project given the word count? Or should we cite previous research to link our themes within the analysis section? Qual reports are written in one of two ways: 1) where the analysis and discussion are in separate sections - in the analysis, you report your findings, in the discussion, you link your findings to the literature, identify limitations etc. 2) you have a joint analysis and discussion section, where you both present your results and link them to the research. Braun & Clarke are talking about the second, whereas we're doing the first option. So, no, just focus on presenting your themes in the analysis section - like with the quant report, you will then have a separate Discussion section where you link to the literature

In the thematic analysis, what should we do if two participants give opposite answers for the same questions. How do we deal with that conflicts? This can make for a really interesting analysis and discussion section! You should explain the theme for the reader, and provide context for the different views presented by the participants. You can find more information in the Braun & Clarke (2013) book

In the interview transcripts came across a nice statement I would like to quote, however the statement was made by the interviewer not the participant. The participant agreed with the interviewers statement. Would it be appropriate to quote the interviewer in this instance? It might depend on what the statement is and the context. So, for example, is it a) the researcher summarising what the participant said and then the participant agreeing or b) the researcher giving their own opinion about it and the participant agreeing? I'd be more likely to say this is okay to include if it was the first than the second, I think. If you were to include it, it would probably be best to a) make sure that there's enough context surrounding this (i.e. what was there in the lead up to it and also afterwards?), and b) only do this sparingly.

Can one of my themes be my RQ or an interview question? No, you should try to go a bit deeper in finding meanings in the data in your analysis. If you end up with a theme that is actually your RQ or one of the interview questions, you have *summarised* the data rather than *analysing* it. This is surprisingly easy to do by accident so don't feel bad if this has happened to you - just go back to the data and look a bit further. What aspects of the RQ does the theme capture? What specifically do the participants say about it?

I started exploring the data without any previous thoughts (inductive) and later I started reading the literature for this topic and unintentionally I started observing some of the same conclusions in my data (deductive). Is this a formal way of analysing the data? Can I report a mixture of approaches? It is possible to do this - here is an example of a paper that used a combination of inductive and deductive coding for TA. This would not be the only way to do it, but is an overview of one possible way in which coding and developing themes could utilise both. My main suggestion would be to be clear with the reader in your methods about the thinking behind your approach.

What if in our analysis we end up developing different themes the three interviews? Do we have to report only the common themes or is it ok if we also analyse themes that are evident only in one or two interviews? Ideally at the themes stage you should consider the dataset as a whole so most of your themes should come from more than one interview Try to find quotes which illustrate the theme not just from one participant. Sometimes themes may be more strongly present in parts of the data and that's ok but try to avoid having one theme that's from one participant only and another one that's from another participant - the themes should represent the data a bit more holistically

What if I develop more than two themes - can I mention the other themes in my analysis section? You can briefly say that you developed more themes but don't waste your word count on explaining them in more detail or talking about the codes related to them (you can talk about them in your submission 2 document where you evidence all the stages. In terms of the discussion, you should focus on the two themes you have chosen and developed a full narrative for (the same way in quant you would not discuss an analysis you did not actually finish) and connect those to existing literature. You can talk about the other stuff as future directions if you would like.

Should the themes be presented in a hierarchical way related with each other?

What if we detect themes that are not related with each other? Do we include data that don't fit anywhere else or if they are trivial we can exclude them from the final It depends on how you identify your themes - they may be strongly related to each other and hierarchical and they may not. There is no one correct way. In the report writing guide, we ask that you report a maximum of two themes (or one theme with 2-3 subthemes) so I would choose those where you would be able to go into the most depth in terms of interpretation report?

###Appendices

What should I include in the reflexive diary? Please see a detailed template with probing questions here: reflexivity diary.

A Qualitative Research Showcases

Throughout RM2, we will showcase some exciting qualitative research which will go beyond what you are taught on the course. For each showcase, we'll provide a couple of research papers for you to look at. You don't need to read these in full (unless you find it interesting and want to!) - the purpose is to give you a little taster of the multifaceted and creative things that can be achieved with qualitative methods. We hope that you find these papers interesting!

A.1 Qualitative research showcase 1 - Alternative data collection methods

On RM2, we mainly focus on "standard" data collection methodologies (interviews, focus groups, qualitative surveys), but much of published qualitative research uses more creative methods, such as art-based approaches (music or photo elicitation, storytelling, collages, etc.), participant-provided diaries, or data scraping. Arts-based approaches allow for data collection which is less formal than an interview/focus group situation might be and they give the participant space to express themselves more freely. Diary studies allow for data collection over time without overburdening the participants, while data scraping is very sueful when working with sensitive topics and/or minority populations that are hard to reach or overburdened by research participation requests.

- Dr Gail Prasad's study explores children's views of plurilingualism through collage-creation. Access the study
- Dr December-Maxwell and colleagues investigate involuntary celibacy through Reddit data. Access the study

Dissertation hint: Data scraping from Reddit (this can be done with R) has been used in previous dissertation projects where primary data collection would be too difficult due to the topic/population, or where a student has wanted to work with secondary data but the topic doesn't have open data available in research databases - keep this in mind for next year!

A.2 Qualitative Research Showcase 2 - Participatory Research

Participatory research refers to the involvement of the groups that are affected by the issue that is being studied. It is becoming increasingly more utilised in qualitative research, and it is considered good practice particularly in the areas where the studied group is disadvantaged or marginalised. The underlying philosophy of participatory research is to see the people studied not as “subjects” to research, but actively participating stakeholders.

- Drs Vaughn and Jacquez have written an excellent review of the different types and core principles of participatory research. Access the article
- Drs Yaros and Schueller conducted a study on positive computing technologies for children with children as co-creators of the research. Access the article
- Dr Crompton and colleagues studied peer support of autistic young adults in schools with a research team that directly involves autistic stakeholders. Pay particular attention to the Community Involvement section of the article. Access the article

Dissertation hint: If you want to work with marginalised or disadvantaged populations for your dissertation, have a conversation early on with your supervisor about how you might want to incorporate participatory elements into your study. Due to the limited timescale, for dissertations this often looks less fully fledged than what you would see in published papers. For example, for a dissertation, the researcher student might have lived experience themselves, or they might reach out to University networks to find a person with lived experience to review the research question and/or analysis.

A.3 Qualitative Research Showcase 3 - Interesting Analysis Methods

In this qualitative research showcase, we highlight a couple of different types of analyses to give a (very small!) snapshot of the variety of qualitative techniques. Please bear in mind these are beyond what is expected from you on RM2 - don’t try to apply these analyses to your report.

- Dr Wilson and colleagues conducted a meta-synthesis of qualitative studies on older adulthood. This is a way to bring together findings from multiple qualitative studies - have a look and see what differences and similarities between this and quantitative meta-analysis. Access the article
- Drs Goodman and Burke conducted a discourse analysis on attitudes to immigrants. Compare and contrast how the analysis is presented and how the quotes are used as opposed to a Thematic Analysis. Access the paper

Dissertation hint: If you are doing a qualitative dissertation, most supervisors will encourage you to do Thematic Analysis because it’s highly structured and there is a lot of guidance available. If you are interested in more advanced qualitative analyses, make sure that you have a discussion about this when talking to potential supervisors to identify whether they support this.