

## **MY400/MY500 Fundamentals of Social Science Research Design**

### **Template for Assignment 2 (Research Design)**

DUE DATE: 4pm, Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (Week 1, Summer Term)

LENGTH: This proposal should be no more than 4,000 words, excluding title/contents page, appendix<sup>1</sup> and bibliography, but including text in tables and footnotes. You are recommended to use 1.5 line spacing for your assignment and a plain serif (e.g. Times New Roman) or sans serif (e.g. Arial) font in font size 11. Advisory lengths for each section of the assignment are provided in brackets overleaf.

SUBMISSION: Please submit your paper on Moodle. We cannot excuse late work on the basis that it was incorrectly uploaded. Please name your file using the format MYX00-GROUPY-ZZZZZ. For example, if you are taking MY400, you are in Seminar group 2, and your candidate number is 98765, you should title your file MY400-GROUP2-98765.

**Please refer to the Department of Methodology Coursework Submission Guidelines for further guidelines on submitting coursework to the Department of Methodology. These guidelines are available to download from the MY400 Moodle pages.** You are responsible for understanding and following the LSE policies on academic integrity and plagiarism:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/socialPolicy/InformationForCurrentStudents/plagiarism.aspx>

FORMAT: A Microsoft Word or PDF document, with numbered pages.

FRONT PAGE: Please put the following information on the front page of your submission:

- 1) The title of your project.
- 2) Your 2019-2020 LSE candidate number.
- 3) Your seminar group number.
- 4) The word count of your submission.

Please do not put your name or your LSE ID **anywhere** on your submission, including the file name.

LATE PENALTY: This assignment is worth 60% of your course mark for MY400/500. Assignments submitted after the deadline will reduce your assignment mark by 5% (and thus your course mark by 1.5%) for every working day they are late. We cannot make exceptions unless you provide evidence of a medical or other emergency that prevented you from submitting the work, or you had already requested and received an extension for other reasons before the deadline.

CONTENT: There is no one ‘correct’ way to write a research design, but here are some guidelines you should consider. In general, please be as specific as possible

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<sup>1</sup> Students are permitted to include a short (1-3 page) appendix as a space to reproduce their proposed data collection instrument (e.g. questionnaire or topic guide), or an extract from it, should they wish. Including an appendix is not, however, a requirement for this assignment.

about your **questions** and **hypotheses**, **definitions**, **case selections** and **strategies**, measurement and variables coding etc., and **methods of data analysis**. We all feel uncertain about whether we're 'getting it right' when we put together a research design, but don't let uncertainty stand in the way of specificity! **Explain important uncertainties, rather than hiding them.**

#### *1. Background/literature review (~3 pages)*

Don't be tempted to dedicate 'too much' space to the background/literature review section! Around three pages should suffice. An effective literature review is one that shows how your research question(s) is situated in the relevant literature in your field, not one that demonstrates that you have read a lot of that literature. So don't include lots of literature on related topics that are not specifically relevant to your contribution. The literature review introduces us to the broader landscape of research that gives rise to your research question(s), which are in a sense your 'point of departure' from what has already been published.

The literature review can begin with a wide angle view, but it should move quite quickly to focus on research/concepts/theory/controversies in those areas that are relevant to your research questions. Because the literature review ought to set up your research questions, those questions should emerge quite organically from the literature review section. In other words, the 'fit' between the literature review and the research questions should be obvious.

#### *2. Research questions (~1 short paragraph [equivalent])*

Research questions may be exploratory or confirmatory, descriptive or explanatory, or may not tidily correspond to any of these categories. Regardless of which of these they are, they need to be clearly and explicitly stated. And make sure that they are actually questions (rather than statements or assumptions)! Research questions may be embedded at the end of section one or articulated as a separate section – either way they should be clearly motivated by the content of the preceding background/literature review section.

#### *3. Data collection strategies (~1-3 pages)*

You need to be very clear in describing the data/evidence that you are using and how the variables or concepts are measured and/or coded. Justify your case selection and/or sampling strategies. Which data collection tools do you propose to use (for example an experiment, a survey, case study, interviews, focus groups, participant observation etc.)? Again you should try to justify the choices that you make, within the practical limitations of your project and timeframe. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the choices that you have made?

#### *4. Data analysis strategies (~1-3 pages)*

Given the decisions you have made about your topic, research questions and data sources – what are the most appropriate forms of analysis? Here you should discuss the analytic method and how it helps answer the question. Note that software is not a method: we do not care if you use Nvivo or Stata, we do care if you use thematic analysis or logistic regression.

### *5. Potential impact and relevance of the study (~0.5-1 page)*

As this is a piece of research design you cannot describe the findings of your study. However, we would like you to anticipate how you could expect your research to make a difference (to the topic and/or disciplinary field at hand and taking into account the type/s of research question/s posed). What findings do you expect, and what findings, if any, would be surprising or contradict your expectations/theoretical stance? How could such findings, whether expected or unexpected, impact the academic literature/policy/practice/public life [as relevant to your topic and design]?

### *6. Limitations and further research (~0.5-1 page)*

Here you should discuss the limitations of your design as currently conceived. There are different kinds of limitations. One kind to consider is how aspects of your research design limit what you can know, or claim, as part of your outcomes. So, for example, generalisability and causality are common limitations, as are reliability and validity. You may only be doing part one of what is a three-part research project. You may be doing what is effectively a pilot study. Another limiting factor can be ethical issues that arise from your research design.

### *7. References*

Please include proper in-text citations and a reference list, consistently using a standard reference format (e.g. the Harvard referencing system). You are advised to provide references for both the substantive and the methodological content of your proposal and we would typically expect to see at least one and a half pages of cited references listed.