

# Further explanation and tips – Methods Chapter

**Submission Date:** Thursday 13 December 2018 by 14:00.

# Methods Chapter (85% of final mark)

- Students are asked to select and justify a research strategy and set of research methods (qualitative or mixed methods) to be presented as a methods chapter as might be expected in a dissertation. Your methods should be based on a broad research question and possibly a set of defined objectives. This could be based on a hypothetical research question or your emerging dissertation research plans. Seminar time will be available to discuss and plan research questions and objectives for this assessment. You should provide a brief introduction to research question but focus on methodological literature to justify your methods selection and the link between your research question and the selection of appropriate methods.
  - Word limit: 3,500 (+/- 10%). Include the total word count underneath the main title. The word count should include any tables and figures but can exclude the list of references.
  - Make sure that all documents and other sources referred to are fully referenced, using the Harvard referencing system.
  - You should submit an electronic copy of your assignment via the Turnitin link on the module VITAL page following the instructions set out there.

# Literature

- You'll need to begin with some introductory text explaining the research topic to introduce your research aim and objectives – this would normally be elsewhere in your thesis or research paper, but for this exercise we need this as context information. You should keep this information to the essential literature. In the region of 1,000 words maximum – although this isn't a strict boundary.
- You will also need to refer to methodological literature significantly to be able to discuss the use and soundness of the research approach, methods and analysis you have selected. The reading list contains useful references as well as the lecture slides throughout the module.

# Methods coverage...

You're aiming for a description of your research approach, methods, data collection and data analysis. Obviously you're writing this before the research has taken place, so you won't know some details, but you can give an indication. For example, you cannot state how many interviews you carried out, but you can state how many you intend to conduct. I do not expect you to make up details, but to give the detail you can. Particularly, don't feel like you should make up reflection on a process which hasn't occurred. But you might highlight some possible limitations or areas where it will be important to reflect on. For example, researcher position during a set of interviews or an ethnography.

# What to include in a methods chapter?

- The theoretical assumptions that are directly affecting your methodological choices (some comment on the theoretical underpinning or background of your work/topic area and how this informs your research).
- How you did (or will do) your research.
- What research design you used and why.
- Which data collection strategy(ies) you adopted and why.
- How and why you chose your research location.
- Important information about your research location(s) in terms of possible biases or limitations.
- Any other factors that may have affected your data in a way that is relevant to your research questions.
- Why your research strategy and methods were appropriate for this research context.
- Which data analysis approaches you selected and why.

(adapted from JENSEN, E. A. & LAURIE, A. C. A. *Doing real research : a practical guide to social research*)

# Style tips

Styles about how to write a method vary across different disciplines. For this module we're working within a qualitative frame and so there are some tips I can suggest, but these aren't set in stone. You might feel some are more suited to your work than others, e.g. qualitative or mixed methods.

- **Pick a tense.** Typically you would write a methods chapter/section in the past tense. But as we're doing this before the research has happened it would be hard to write some of the detail in the past tense. I would suggest writing in the future tense. 'I will... it will... we will...'
- **First or third person.** For this type of research I think either works. If you're more comfortable avoiding the first person, then do. But equally, as particularly for qualitative methods, the role of the researcher is important, 'I' can be extremely useful.
- **Passive or active voice.** Different disciplines have different conventions. I think either is fine, chose the voice you think suits the way you should talk about research. This [magazine article](#) might clarify this for you.
- **Be consistent!**

# Formatting

## Headings

Can be useful for this type of writing,

**but think about different levels.**

Multiple levels can be numbered or indicated with differently sized text, but they should help the reader make sense of the text and its structure.

I think there should be text under each heading though, rather than moving straight from main heading, to sub-heading without text. This could be as simple as explaining what sub-headings come under the main heading.

*Don't go too far thought,*

there is such a thing as too many levels and the reader loses track. Three, perhaps four, is a good limit to set yourself.