AIM

The module aims to introduce social science students to the different steps in the development of a research project from its conceptualization to the dissemination of its findings through its concrete management. It aims to give a general overview of the decisions social researchers have to make when they develop a sociological project. It will introduce students to a range of processes of reasoning and practice in social research. It aims to develop students’ understanding of the dimensions and demands of good research management both in terms of design and methodology and with regard to wider considerations such as research governance, ethics and the audiences for and dissemination of research.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this module students will:

- be able to anticipate a range of demands associated with the process of research management
- be aware of specific differences between different types of project and the management issues each raises
- to be aware that there are a wide range of methodological approaches in social research
- to judge what sampling methods and types of survey are appropriate to particular research problems.
- be able to design in outline a research project
- be able to weigh the pros and cons of the different options researchers have at each step of research process

ORGANISATION

This module will be taught through a combination of formal lectures and practical exercises and workshops.

CONTENT

The course steers students through a series of issues that build towards a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the different requirements that must be met if research is to be well managed. These are both disciplinary, in terms of good methodological practice and design, and more institutionally focused with respect to managing research with issues such as IP, publication and dissemination in mind. The module is organised on a weekly basis with more formal presentations then group work focused around the development of a fictitious research project.
### Indicative module content

(Along with indicative key readings and student tasks)

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**Week 2. What is social research?**

This session will introduce students to social research and its different steps (theory, theoretical propositions, operationalisation, fieldwork and results). It will also discuss the different issues it raises in terms of data preparation and collection, dissemination of the findings and ethical implications.

**Week 3. Research Design and management**

This session will show the importance of research design. It is an introduction to defining a problem and building a researchable project (research strategies and questions). It will also discuss the common challenges for research in term of management (labour division, managing research development, reports, delays, etc.).

**Week 4. Sample and research surveys I**

The sampling strategy is essential for the analysis of the data and the generalisability of the findings. The session will discuss the different elements a researcher needs to specify regarding the sample (size, justification, representativeness). It will present the pros/cons to the different sample methods. Sampling is more generally an element to define the type of survey to use. This session will introduce students to the different types of surveys.

**Week 5. Research surveys II and constructing a questionnaire**

This session will continue the presentation of the different types of surveys and discuss a number of questions researcher might ask that can help balance the advantages and disadvantages of different survey types. We will also see how to write questions for surveys, and more especially a questionnaire.
Week 6. Ethics, Access and Procedures

This session will discuss ethical issues raised by data collection and dissemination of the findings. We will see the procedure to follow in case the project includes research with human subjects (respondents’ safety, dignity, welfare and privacy).

Week 7. Writing and publishing academic research

The session will discuss the dissemination of research to different audiences (fellow academics, lay public, government, corporate sector, etc.). We will present to different ways to disseminate the findings (reports, workshops, very specialized publications, press releases, etc.).

Week 8. Research funding & evaluation

The session will explain the importance of evaluation in the research process and introduce students to the different criteria used to evaluate research proposals and completed research.

Week 9.

In this final session, each small group will give an oral presentation of their outline research project focusing in particular on the research management issues that it raises for the research team.

ASSESSMENT

Students are required to prepare an outline research proposal in small groups, as the module progresses, with each of the themes covered via the lectures addressed in the proposal. Proposals will be presented as a PPT presentation and discussed in a final 2 hour session.

This will be assessed formally and weighted at 25% of the overall grade for the module.

In addition, each student, separately, is required to write a 1500 word critical assessment (in total) of no more than two sources that the group has consulted in preparing the background work for the formal PPT presentation. A PDF of the PPT needs to be attached to the critical commentary.

The assessment (weighted at 75%) should focus on:

- the relationship between the overall objective of the authors of the research project and the methods they used – was this sensible, did it meet data collection requirements, was there an alternative way of developing the research?
- what practical (in terms of research management) challenges were likely to have been faced by the authors of the research?
USEFUL GENERAL SOURCES


