
Applied qualitative interviewing (PS1FT62)

PhD programme, VT26
Dept of Psychology
Stockholm University

Course leader: Charlotte Alm

Overarching purpose and content

The purpose of the course is to give advanced theoretical and applied knowledge within the area qualitative research interviews. The course provides advanced competency in the application of qualitative interview methods as a data collection instrument, including strategies and pre-requisites for qualitative data collection, ethical considerations in qualitative studies, transcription of interview data, as well as interpretation and analysis of interview data. Throughout the course, psychological aspects on the interview situation including relevant interpersonal processes in the interview meeting will also be considered in association with the interview work.

Study goals

A passing grade on the course requires that the students:

- give an account of, analyze, discuss, and apply theoretical aspects on qualitative methods that have been presented during the course
- consider and apply theoretical knowledge about qualitative interview methods when planning and conducting, as well as in association with analysis and feedback on own recorded and transcribed interviews
- consider relevant research ethical considerations when it comes to their own qualitative interview work as well as follow good scientific practice
- plan and conduct qualitative interviews as well as transcribe and analyze interview data
- integrate insights into their own interview work based on experiences of being a respondent in other students' interviews

Course activities

The course covers theoretical and applied aspects on qualitative research interviews. The course includes strategies and pre-requisites for qualitative data collection, ethical considerations, construction of an interview guide, conducting, transcribing and analyzing interview data. Also, it includes recorded interviews as well as psychological aspects on the interview situation. The course activities consist of lectures, seminars, workshops, interview exercises and data collection under supervision.

The following are course requirements/mandatory parts:

- (a) Attendance at mandatory lectures, seminars and workshops
- (b) Theoretically and ethically adequately execution of all interviews and supervision scheduled on the course
- (c) written tasks submitted according to examiner's instruction
- (e) participation as respondent in other course mates' interviews

To be able to take part in interview exercises, it is required that course requirement (a) is fulfilled with attendance on occasions pertaining to ethical aspects and choice of topic, (b) that all previous interviews and supervision occasions are completed according to the schedule, (c) that all submissions of tasks are completed and (e) that participation as respondent in previous interviews by course mates is completed.

Completion of all interview exercises under supervision is a requirement for the student to be able to attend in the examination.

Student who has not completed course requirement (b) can, before the subsequent interview exercise, compensate by conducting a maximum of one interview under supervision according to the examiner's instructions. Missed attendance from other mandatory lectures, seminar or workshops (max 2 occasions) can be compensated through extra tasks according to the examiner's instructions. Student who has not completed course requirement (e) can compensate by participating as respondent in extra interviews according to the examiner's instructions.

Please note that missed choice of topic seminar as well as feedback sessions cannot be compensated.

Purpose, research questions, frame and interview guide must be submitted before the deadline. If submitted after the deadline, interview 1 may not be conducted at the time scheduled. The reason for this is that the task must be approved of before the student can start interviewing. Since all interviews need to be conducted in order, a postponed interview 1 might also affect all subsequent interviews in turn risk prohibiting the student from completing the course at this particular semester. Submission after deadline of the transcription of interview 5 (including the reflection of the own interview work) renders an additional task to be completed. This task can be retrieved from the course leader.

Course activities related to the interview work

During the course, the course participants will in depth explore qualitative interview and its possibilities as a data collection method. The interview course activities start in association with the course introduction when smaller feedback groups are formed (4-5 course participants/group), followed by introduction to the approach Thematic Analysis (TA). After this, one lecture on quality in qualitative interviews and one lecture on methods and ethics will be given after a seminar on the choice of topic for the interviews. The participants will also start working on their individual interview guides. The purpose, research question(s) and interview guide including presentation of the topic and frames are to be uploaded at Athena no later than the time specified in the schedule. The supervisor needs to approve of the content of this document before the interviews are commenced; revisions may be required before it is approved.

Ethical considerations

Research ethics, in particular concerning qualitative interview methodology, will be covered during the lecture on method and ethical considerations. *Well in advance* of each interview these ethical aspects are to be communicated to the respondent *in writing* e.g. through text message or email,

using the document "Ethics & frames" on Athena. This is done so that an **informed consent** in the form of a written response to the text message/email, can be collected. An informed consent means that the respondent receives information about what it means to be a respondent in this particular study and which they have a chance to say yes or no to before being included in the interview. The ethical aspects are presented within what is called the frames and which introduces the interview together with a presentation of the interviewer and the purpose of the interview. Right *before* the interview starts, the participant is to receive the same information orally and give their consent. Ethical issues are to be dealt with on an ongoing basis during the interviews and can therefore be subject to the feedback when they are processed within the feedback group. Such aspects can involve that the interviewer poses questions about things that are not part of the agreement about the contents of the interview et cetera. Interview questions are not to ask about sensitive personal data/information (e.g. ethnic origin, political opinion and health data). If such information is brought up by a participant, the information cannot be used in tasks that are submitted including the exam and is to be deleted in transcriptions.

Please note that the frames including the ethical aspects are to be stated exactly as they are formulated in the document "Ethics & frames" once they have been adopted appropriately to the specific study and interview occasion. A documented informed consent in writing is a requirement for an interview to be given a passing grade.

Confidentiality

Conducting the interviews during the course requires that course participants both interview and are interviewed as well as take part of other participants' interviews. In addition, the feedback process requires a sensitivity regarding how information is conveyed and handled. Even though the interviews are to avoid ethically sensitive topics, taken together this means that information related to interviews and feedback sessions are to be kept confidential. More specific, the information is not to be spread outside of the supervision and the feedback group, recorded interviews are to be erased permanently after the course is finished and feedback sessions are not to be recorded or shared with third party. Course participants are to hand in a signed agreement with the confidentiality statement to the course leader before they can conduct interviews (the document can be found on the planning for the introduction at Athena).

Interviews

There are in total five interviews in the course, each 10 minutes. The interviewer is responsible for keeping the time and for making sure that the interview questions in the interview guide are covered adequately. For interviews 2, 3, and 5, make sure that both interviewer and interviewee are seated in a place where they are not disturbed. Due to confidentiality, other people are not to be able to take part of the interview. If conducting these interviews in Zoom, it is possible to use headset/head phones (but please see below about recording in Zoom). Interview 1s and 4 are recorded during the specified times in the schedule.

There will be a schedule on Athena, pairing interviewees and interviewers among the course participants for interview 1 and 4. If one chooses not to interview the assigned person, or if not consenting to be interviewed, please inform both the course leader and the assigned interviewee/interviewer well in advance so that appropriate adjustments can be made. Having the

experience of being an interviewee is important for one's understanding of conducting interviews, and thus pedagogically meaningful. Course participants decide for themselves, and without any consequences, whether to participate as an interviewee or not in any given interview, however participation in two interviews is mandatory on the course. Course participants recruit their own respondents for interviews 2, 3 and 5 (not family members/partners, close relatives or friends). Please note however that choosing a topic that does not work with course participants as interviewees means that one needs to recruit own participants external from the course so as not to interrupt the recording schedule.

Feedback sessions

Each interview will be played back and discussed/reflected upon within the feedback group. The aim of the feedback is to convey what the students have learned well and what they need to improve. It is grounded in the course literature (the "knowing" and the "knowing how") and on procedural skills of interviewing (the "doing"). **All participants in the feedback group are to be active** (listening – reflecting) during the entire feedback session, **also in connection with the other participants' interviews**. In addition, it is expected that participants' informed engagement will be increasingly visible by each session. Commitment to the feedback session including engagement with other students' interview work contributes significantly to understanding what it means to ethically collect rich interview data. Course participants should learn from all interviews and feedback sessions and apply insights into each new interview. This process is an important foundation for the knowledge progression throughout the course. Interviews are therefore not to be conducted before all previously conducted interviews have been reflected upon and discussed.

The supervisor moderates and leads the feedback sessions for interview 1 and 4. Interviews 2, 3 and 5 are played back and discussed within the group only, that is without the supervisor. A verbatim transcription of interview 5 together with a reflection about the student's own interview work throughout the course (about 1 A4-page) is to be uploaded on Athena for the supervisor to approve of (see schedule for deadline). If interview 5 contains any sensitive personal data/information (e.g. ethnic origin, political opinions or health data) such parts need to be omitted when transcribing and uploading it on Athena for review by the supervisor. It is not permissible to bring up such information in the reflection part of this task. Interviews 2 and 3 are *not* to be transcribed and cannot be used for the examination. Please note that the supervisor can request that any of these two interviews are to be submitted for review by the supervisor. As is the case for all other interviews, interviews 2 and 3 are to be erased once the course is completed.

Recording device

Audio tracks of interviews conducted in Zoom can be recorded through the interviewer's cell phone or with a digital recording device that can be borrowed from the course leader. There is a recording function in Zoom but it may not be used in this course since it produces not only an audio file but also a video file. Participants have not given their consent to be video recorded during interview 2, 3 and 5. Please also note that it is not permissible to ask for participant's consent to do so for these three interviews. Breaches of this will result in interviews having to be erased immediately. Video recording is only done supervised during interviews 1 and 4, and for which participants are asked for their consent. Do a recording test before each interview to check that the technique is working and that the sound quality is sufficient to be able to hear what is being said.

Transcription of interviews

Interview 5 is transcribed as part of the material for the supervisor to evaluate (see above). For the examination task, two transcribed interviews (each interview judged by the supervisor to be of passing quality) are to be attached and used for an analysis of the data. It is possible to choose between interview 1, 4 and 5 for the examination task.

Bear in mind that it may take about 1-2 hours to transcribe 10 minutes of interview material. The transcription is to be verbatim which means that all words uttered by both interviewer and interviewee are to be written down. Indicate throughout who is saying what (e.g. R = respondent, I = Interviewer). For the purpose of this course it is however not necessary to write in spoken language, write repetitions of words and letters etc. if they do not fill a function for instance if an interviewee emphasize the importance of something and therefore repeat it. Do include filler word such as eh and um, note silences (e.g. with three dots ...) and note laughter, clears throat etc. to the extent that these things are possible to hear in the audio tracks. An example of a transcribed statement from a respondent is given below. Note how some information about the respondent has been removed since it might identify them (the place where they work). Such information should be removed in the transcription and also when providing quotes when writing up the results. Here, R stands for respondent.

R *When I looked down at my cell phone (...) it became like a reflection, it was like I saw myself exactly then and there and I realized that I didn't (...) ehh really need to go in there [the name of the company where the respondent work].*

When giving quotes from an interview make sure to use a system that makes it possible to find the quote in the transcription. For instance, give each respondent a pseudonym, state on which page and which row number the quote is to be found: 4: 23-24. In Word this is done through **Insert --> Page number** and **Layout --> Page number --> Start over for each page**.

All interview files are to be erased as soon as the course is finished.

Information about our course quality work

We continuously work on securing the quality in our education. One part of this work is that we, with the consent of the course participants, save interview 4 for analysis of the supervisors' work and evaluations. This work is done completely separate from the evaluation of the students' work and has the sole purpose of developing supervisor competency and work with course quality. Interviews are saved only with participant's consent which is given both prior to and after interview 4 has been conducted. This is entirely voluntary and those that have consented have the right to withdraw their consent at any time and request without any consequences to have their interview deleted. The interviews will be saved at Stockholm University GDPR-safe cloud service where only teachers working on course quality for this course have access. The interviews will be deleted after 1,5 years since we work continuously with these issues and as part of that work use current supervisor work as a starting point.

Format of the course

Most activities on the course are given on site at campus. Please note it will not be possible to attend digitally on any of these activities. Interviews 2, 3 and 5 can be reflected upon and discussed either in Zoom or on-site together with the feedback group. For ethical reasons, course participants are to sit in a secluded place where third party cannot take part of the meetings. Interviews 1 and 4 will be conducted on site at the department's own recording studio equipped with video recording devices in separate interview rooms. Video recorded interviews give an opportunity to include also interpersonal aspects that are otherwise are not observable.

Plagiarism, cheating and unallowed cooperation

It is a part of the responsibility as a student to be aware of the rules that concern examination. More detailed information can be found on the webpage of Stockholm University: [Your rights and responsibility](#). Teachers are required to report suspected plagiarism to the principle and the Disciplinary Council. Plagiarism and cheating are always disciplinary cases and may lead to suspension of education. One example of plagiarism is to word-by-word or almost word-by-word copy a text (even occasional sentences) regardless of whether a source is given or not. This applies also to own previous texts (self-plagiarism) and translations from one language to another. One example of cheating is to use unallowed aids and resources such as using the help of another person or letting another person or AI such as chatgpt create or write the exam, create or transcribe interview data, search or use information on the Internet or in course text books in an exam where such resources are not permitted. To study in groups with other students is often rewarding and time saving, but when it comes to examination tasks it is important to work alone (unless otherwise stated in exam instructions) in order to avoid unallowed cooperation.

Examination

The course is examined through a written individual take-home-exam. The exam is made available at the end of the course and to be uploaded on Athena before deadline according to schedule and will then be checked for plagiarism. The exam is made up of an analysis of two interviews of sufficient quality, as evaluated by the supervisor, and which is presented according to instructions. It also includes a number of essay-type questions regarding interview method requiring reasoning based on course content explicitly shown by ongoing references to course literature.

The interviews are to be uploaded in a separate box on Athena by the same deadline as the exam. They are to be devoid of possible identifying information. Quotes from the transcriptions are to be used to illustrate results and reasoning. It should be made explicit from where in the transcripts the quotes are taken. References with page numbers (but all else should be according to APA) to the course text books should be made ongoing. The course books are primary sources for this task, but lectures, seminars and other scientific literature such as articles can also be referenced. Do not refer to information in the course that comes from other participants' interviews or the like.

Literature

Mandatory course text books

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Sage. ISBN: 9781412978378.

Terry, G., & Hayfield, N. (2021). *Essentials of Thematic Analysis*. Essentials of Qualitative Methods Series. American Psychological Association. ISBN: 9781433835575.

Articles and other resources (NOTE this list can be updated up until the course starts)

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18, 328-352, DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and Design Thinking for Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3-26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>

Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56, 1391-1412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y>

Folkes, L. (2023). Moving beyond 'shopping list' positionality: Using kitchen table reflexivity and in/visible tools to develop reflexive qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 23(5), 1301-1318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221098922>

King, N., Horrocks, C., & Brooks, J. (2019). *Interviews in qualitative research (2nd Edition)*. Sage. (Pages 192-196 about transcription can be found on Athena.)

Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. *American Psychologist*, 73(1), 26-46. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000151>

McNair, R., Taft, A., & Hegarty, K. (2008). Using reflexivity to enhance in-depth interviewing skills for the clinician researcher. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 8(73). doi:10.1186/1471-2288-8-73

Website with many good IPA-resources: <http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk.ezp.sub.su.se/>

Website with many good TA-resources: <https://www.thematicanalysis.net/>

Grading criteria

The grade of the take-home-exam is the basis for the final course grade. In order to pass the course the exam is to receive a passing grade and course requirements need to be fulfilled. Exams that are uploaded after the deadline will not be evaluated and given the grade Fx. It is possible to compensate an Fx-grade at the next examination occasion. Compensations for an Fx-exam that are uploaded after deadline are given the grade Fx.

Grade	Score	Criteria
Pass	78-100	Minimum requirement is that the student with their own words give an account of differences and similarities between central terms, theories and models and can apply central terms on own examples. A higher score, but still of passing quality, also includes that the student reason about the central term's relevance, drawbacks and validity. An even higher score, but still of passing quality, includes that the student independently makes connections between the central terms, argue and discuss in relation to the course literature and integrates in a commendable way relevant principles and problematizations at a comprehensive theoretical level.
Fail	<78	Student does not exhibit expected study goals ranging up to student with their own words give an account of differences and similarities between central terms, theories and models but do <i>not</i> apply central terms.
