Course Information

Data collection is the heart of research. It’s easy to be misled by the overwhelming amount of information available today. However, quantity and quality are not the same, and finding reliable, relevant information requires skill. Translating information into data requires other skills. This module focuses on qualitative data within the context of interdisciplinary research: data accumulation, sorting, assessing, and combining to create meaning. We’ll direct our attention towards specific real-world problems. We’ll use a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary tools to construct relevant data sets. We’ll investigate ways to think critically about quality and relevance.

Basic course information

| Moodle site: | https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=18468&section=0 |
| Assessment: | Assignment A1: individual coursework (40%)  
Assignment A2: group video diary (10%)  
Assignment B1: group report (40%)  
Assignment B2: group viva (10%) |
| Timetable: | https://timetable.ucl.ac.uk/tt/moduleTimet.do?firstReq=Y&moduleId=BASC1002 |
| Prerequisites: | None |
| Required texts: | Martin Brett Davies (2007), Doing A Successful Research Project (Basingstoke: Palgrave) |
| Course tutors: | Dr Chiara Ambrosio  
Dr Karen Bultitude  
Sara Wingate-Gray |
| Contact: | c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk  020 7679 0166  
karen.bultitude@ucl.ac.uk  020 7679 4431  
sara.wingate.gray@ucl.ac.uk  020 3108 1159 |
| Web: | http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/ambrosio  
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/bultitude  
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/basc/people/academic-staff/sara-wingate-gray |
| Office location: | Department of Science and Technology Studies, 22 Gordon Square  
Ambrosio Room 1.2  
Bultitude Room 3.3  
Wingate-Gray Room B1, 33-35 Torrington Place |
<p>| Office hours: | See Moodle Page |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UCL Week</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Lecture Date</th>
<th>Workshop Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Introduction and course overview</td>
<td>9 Jan</td>
<td>Assignment A – Interview (see below) – practical steps and a research contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>What are qualitative research methods?</td>
<td>16 Jan</td>
<td>Interview methodology and methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>What are Research Ethics? Analysing qualitative data</td>
<td>23 Jan</td>
<td>Confirm your research is being conducted ethically</td>
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<td>Work on assignment A</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>What is “scientific method”? A philosopher’s approach</td>
<td>30 Jan</td>
<td>Troubleshooting on assignment A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>What is “scientific method”? A sociologist’s approach</td>
<td>6 Feb</td>
<td>Data analysis / coding /writing up qualitative research</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Reading week</td>
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<td>Reading week</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Research: Art Meets Science</td>
<td>20 Feb</td>
<td>Assignment B overview and practical issues</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Social science in the real world</td>
<td>27 Feb</td>
<td>Work on assignment B</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Beyond interviews: other qualitative methods</td>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>Work on assignment B</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Making an impact: How does research inform non-academic audiences?</td>
<td>13 Mar</td>
<td>Work on assignment B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Group pitches (formative feedback for Assignment B1)</td>
<td>20 Mar</td>
<td>Assignment B2 – in-depth assessed discussion (viva) with groups.</td>
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Each week there will be one or two readings assigned – see Moodle lecture sections. It is important that you read these (there is no need to take copious notes). Lecture slides will be available on Moodle in weekly sections.
## Assessments

### Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Word / time limit</th>
<th>Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback</th>
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<td>Individual coursework: 40%</td>
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<td>1500</td>
<td>19 March 2017</td>
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<td>Group video diary: 10%</td>
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<td>13 March 2017</td>
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<td>w/c 20 April 2017</td>
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<tr>
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### Notes:

- Assignment A2 is due before Assignment A1
- Assignment A1 should be submitted via Moodle
- Assignment A2 should be submitted in ONE of the following ways:
  - (a) to YouTube - you must set the video as private but do not add anyone to the share list (as this can then only be accessed from a gmail rather than a ucl email account). Submit the link in one email to both Karen Bultitude karen.bultitude@ucl.ac.uk and your workshop tutor.
  - (b) on a memory stick (preferably within an envelope or similar so it doesn’t get lost) to Karen Bultitude’s pigeon-hole in the STS Department office (ground floor, 22 Gordon Square – not Gordon Street!). Note that this memory stick should NOT contain any other files, and may need to be kept by the module team until the marks have been returned to you.

In either case make sure you include a note which clearly mentions both the name of your team AND the list of team members involved.

- Individually submit your anonymised comments on your team’s contributions via email to your workshop tutor using the template provided on Moodle.
- ONE copy of Assignment B1 should be submitted via Moodle on behalf of the group.
- Assignment B2 (group viva) will take place during the normal workshop sessions.
- The research proposal pitches provide an opportunity for formative feedback on your research proposal and will occur during the final lecture session (March 26th).

Further details for each of the above assignments are provided later in this Syllabus.
Aims & objectives

Aims:
The aim of this course is to introduce BASc students to interdisciplinary research methods, particularly those used in the social sciences and humanities (i.e. qualitative research methods).

Objectives:
By the end of the course students will:

- Have explored a broad range of research methods, in particular qualitative social science research methods.
- Have been introduced to debates about research ethics and also philosophical and sociological views on ‘the scientific method’
- Have engaged in a practical interviewing exercise involving data collection and analysis
- Have engaged in reflexive practice through compiling a video diary and undergoing a group viva
- Have gained experience in group work
- Have applied the content of the course through formulating a research proposal that employs interdisciplinary methods

Course expectations
Students are expected to attend all lectures and workshops and to undertake group and individual work outside of contact hours. **If you miss more than three sessions without documented medical or other extenuating circumstances then you may be given a zero mark for the course.** All coursework must be submitted in order for students to complete the course.

Criteria for assessment
The departmental marking guidelines for individual items of assessment can be found in the STS Student Handbook. Further details regarding the regulations for assessments on this module (including penalties for late work, submissions outside the specified word / time limit, extenuating circumstances etc. etc.) are contained within Section 11 of the BASC Student Handbook (requires you to log into Moodle).

Reading list
The set text for this module is:


Additionally, for each topic area you will be provided with a list of essential and recommended readings. An online reading list is provided (see Moodle) to assist you in finding the appropriate resources. You should read the ‘essential’ document(s) in advance of the session to which they relate; failure to do so may mean you cannot participate fully in the session. However the ‘recommended’ readings are optional. You are of course also encouraged to read widely around the topic areas, and to identify other suitable evidence sources that are relevant to your assessment submissions.
Assignment A: What is Research?

The aim of this assignment is to get you to think about what is involved in doing academic research. Most academics who will teach you on the BASc are involved in research at the cutting-edge of their fields. This is the same for most teaching staff at UCL. Likewise, some UCL students are studying in single discipline degrees and others (such as you) are studying highly interdisciplinary degrees. But what, if anything, is distinctive about their different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches? Are some questions more suited to different approaches, methods and ways of thinking – or is there one single ‘scientific method’?

The second aim of this assignment is practical, to get you to use qualitative research methods to carry out an investigation into the questions above. In groups you will carry out 3 short interviews with different members of UCL staff and students, transcribe those interviews and keep a group video diary. Your efforts will be assessed as follows:

(A1) as an individual for the write-up of your findings (40% of the overall coursemark)

(A2) as a group for the video diary (10% of the overall coursemark)

You will also have a formative feedback opportunity in the form of anonymised comments from other group members regarding your contribution to the group’s work during Assignment A.

The exercise

Each workshop group will be divided into two groups (around 6-8 people in each). This will give us around 20 groups in total.

Within each group of approximately 6-8 people:

1. Each group to is locate, arrange and conduct a short (20-25 minute) qualitative interview with THREE UCL members of teaching/research staff and students: find out about their research or area of study; find out what is distinctive about their approach; how do they perceive themselves in terms of disciplinary identity; what is it like to be training to be or part of a particular disciplinary community?

2. So, there will be a total of 3 interviews per group:
   (A) a member of UCL teaching or research staff
   (B) a UCL student
   (C) either staff or student – it’s your choice!

3. Once your group has finished the transcriptions, you may want to meet to discuss any similarities, differences and other themes emerging from the interviews.

4. Write a 1500-word individual report (Assignment A1). What are your findings from the interviews about how members of different academic disciplines perceive their disciplines? Compare and contrast the main themes in your three interviews. If possible, relate this to material covered in the lectures

5. Throughout all the above stages, as a group you need to keep a record, in the form of a video diary, of the process of doing interdisciplinary qualitative research. The video should emphasise the research process rather than the substance of what you found out. Topics you might want to consider (but are not limited to) could include: What kind of difficulties are you experiencing in collecting information for your
project? What kind of methodological questions arise from conducting interviews with both students and cutting-edge experts? How does working as a group affect your research on the project?

6. As a group submit a 10-15 minute edited version of this video diary (Assignment A2).
7. Individually submit (via email to your workshop tutor) anonymised feedback for each of your group members using the template provided (see Moodle). Be honest but fair in your comments – this formative feedback exercise is designed to give you a chance to reflect on the group’s operation so far, develop your own teamwork skills, and maximise the effectiveness of your group in Assignment B.

Assignment A1: Preparing a good submission

Note UCL policies for late submission without documented extenuating circumstances.
You should upload your assignment to Turnitin via the Moodle site by 23:59hrs on the day of the deadline.

Note UCL policies on word length. Do not go over the word count and do not write less than 90% of the maximum (but don’t stress about going over or under by a few words). Use an easy to read font (e.g. Arial 12pt), at least 1.5 line spacing and include page numbers and word count (excluding references at the end).

A good write-up will:

1. Be well structured (See Brett Davies 211-214 and 226-7 for guidance).
   We suggest you include (although you may have reasons to adapt) the following sections:
   a) Introduction and overview [keep it fairly brief]. You may want to say something a bit more general where you ended up focussing in your interviews e.g. interdisciplinarity, methods, research funding, ethics etc. – the aim is to open by providing a general context for the assignment.
   b) Aims and objectives of the assignment [keep it brief]
   c) Methods used [keep it brief – a lot of this will be in your group video diary] and who was interviewed (NOT names as you MUST report the interviews anonymously – just a general description e.g. geographer, philosopher etc.)
   d) Research findings [this should be the bulk of your write-up]
   e) Discussion – reflect on your research findings and their implications, for example drawing on links to material covered in the lectures or in the follow-up reading.
   f) Conclusions – relate this back to the introduction and the aims and objectives sections.
   g) References to any academic literature cited in the write-up (this does NOT count in the word count)

2. Be clearly and fluently written.
3. Have incorporated appropriate ethical considerations. For example all data are reported anonymously using general descriptors for identification rather than names.
4. Have identified and discussed themes that arise across interviews. An indicative number would be 3 separate themes but this really depends on the material your team has gathered. See Brett Davies p225 for more guidance. More detailed or thoughtful discussions of two themes might be better than a superficial treatment of 4 themes.
5. **Made good use of quotes.** Don’t just let quotes ‘speak for themselves’. Don’t make quotes longer than they need to be (they do count towards your word count!). Add your own commentary to quotes so readers aren’t left having to do their own work to make sense of them. You can anonymise quotes but still give some information about who is speaking e.g. (Male, early career, philosopher) or (Female, senior lecturer, biochemist) etc.
   See Brett Davies p227 for more guidance.

6. **Relate what you write to the aims and objectives of the exercise.**

7. **Interpret and analyse rather than simply describe** and repeat what was in the interviews. See Brett Davies pp191-194 for more on this.

8. **Draw out similarities and contrasts** between the interviews.

9. **Identify interesting issues and/or new questions** resulting from your analysis.

10. The very best assignments will make some attempt to bring in some of the ideas and concepts discussed in lectures or the follow-up reading on the reading list and Moodle site to the discussion.

11. **Make appropriate use of referencing and citation** – you should adopt a common convention and be consistent. We recommend the Harvard style - about which you can search for guidance on the internet for more details - but essentially uses the surname and date in the text (Brett Davies, 2007) and then cites the full reference at the end: Brett Davies, M (2007), *Doing a Successful Research Project Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Assignment A2: Preparing a good submission

**Note UCL policies for late submission without documented extenuating circumstances.**
You should upload your assignment to YouTube or submit it on a USB key by 4pm on the day of the deadline (see page 3 of this Module Syllabus for further details).

You can touch on one or more of the points we suggest below:

1. **Sense of process:** the purpose of the video diary is to make sure that your project is developing. We expect you to do some work on your interviews on a weekly basis, and the video diary should be a record of the issues emerging from the progress that your group makes each week on the project. In the past, videos that seemed like they were put together in the last few days of the project have not scored as well as videos that provide a sense of a ‘journey’.

2. **Depth of reflection:** what problems have you encountered in putting together your project and arranging your interviews? How did your group overcome these problems? What potential problems do you expect will arise in the last stages of your interviews? What did you learn from the difficulties and opportunities you encountered in your interviews? What went particularly well in your interviews, and why?

3. **Technical or other difficulties** can be an opportunity for methodological reflection: did you experience any difficulties with equipment, editing or recording? Or challenges in working within your group? What did you learn from that, how would you approach such matters differently in future? What does all this tell us about qualitative methods?

4. **Any other issues** arising from your interviews?
Top tips for Assignment A

Planning and implementing the research:

• Make sure you read: Brett Davies, M (2007), *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave). Chapter 10. Qualitative Research Interviewing. (a digitised version of this chapter is available from the Moodle page). This is a good ‘how to’ guide for this assignment. There are also copies in the DMS Watson Science library and also plenty of other books on qualitative social science research if you can’t locate Brett Davies. **Further reading is included in the online reading list accessible from the module Moodle page.**

• Ideally, you should seek to EITHER interview people all in one discipline OR from three diverse disciplines (e.g. a natural science, a social science, a humanities discipline). Choosing two from a similar discipline and a third from a very different discipline will make it very difficult for you to make any meaningful conclusions!

• Don’t just make “easy” or obvious choices in your interviewees: try to avoid interviewing your Personal Tutor or other staff who are already well known to you. Please note that in order to avoid over burdening individual interviewees you **MUST receive approval from your workshop tutor before contacting anyone.**

• Students should be at MSc or PhD level (postgraduate) but if you get stuck you may interview a non-BASc undergraduate (BA or BSc, MSci) student. Ideally, they should be in their second or third/final year. This will not affect your grade provided you have demonstrated to your workshop tutor that you have done your best to recruit suitable postgraduate students.

• The interviews are to be transcribed by the group. 10 minutes of recorded talk can take up to an hour to transcribe, so everyone should take responsibility for a portion of each interview. In previous years, students have found Apps like Audacity and Garageband useful for slowing down the recordings to help transcribe material.

• Make use of the course convenors’ and workshop tutors’ office hours to discuss any issues (see the Moodle page). Please make sure you contact them in advance to make an appointment during their office hours or you may miss out.

Conducting ethically appropriate research:

There will be a lecture in week 3 of this course to update you on relevant research ethics perspectives. It is essential that you follow appropriate ethical processes in conducting your research. It is UCL policy that **any research that is NOT conducted according to the processes described below will automatically receive a zero grade.** Fortunately, operating in an ethically appropriate manner is relatively straightforward:

• All interviewees must be **adults who are capable of deciding for themselves** whether to participate or not. This means you must not coerce anyone into participating, and can’t involve anyone who is younger than 18 years old, or for whatever reason does not have the capacity to make their own legal decisions.

• You need to receive **informed consent** from your interviewees prior to the interview going ahead. This means that you need to inform them verbally and in a prior e-mail about the purpose of the interview, its likely duration, and the proposed outcome that the interview will feed into. They must then actively agree to participate.
• The focus of discussion must be on professional matters that the participant could reasonably be expected to be asked by anyone interested in their research, rather than any personal or ethically controversial issues.

• All face-to-face data collection must occur in an easily accessible public location, for example on campus and usually in the office or laboratory of the academic being interviewed. Each interview will normally be conducted by more than one student.

• All data is to be reported anonymously so do not mention your interviewees’ names anywhere in your report. Use general descriptions such as e.g. “geography PhD student” or “philosophy academic” if you want to distinguish them by topic & role.

• Be careful where and how you store your interview data (this includes the recordings as well as the transcripts):
  o Any computers, tablets or mobile phones where data files are stored must be password protected and preferably encrypted.
  o If you store any data files on USB keys or external drives then again make sure they are password protected. If that’s not possible to apply across the drive then make sure the individual file has a password preventing anyone accessing it if the drive is accidentally lost.
  o If you decide to print any of your data out in hardcopy then make sure it is anonymised. For example transcripts should NOT contain the name of the individual being interviewed (again, use a more general label instead).

• This is very rare, but if a participant contacts you to ask to withdraw their data then such data must be permanently deleted: shredded in the case of hardcopy versions, and permanently deleted in the case of electronic versions.

• The data from the interviews is only to be used for the purposes of these assignments, and is not to be transferred or used for any other purpose. This also goes for any contact details or other personal information collected about the interviewees.

**Analysing your data:**

• There is plenty of helpful guidance in Brett Davies on how to analyse your data (Chapter 12) and on writing it up (Chapter 13). Make sure you ask your seminar tutor to discuss how to start analysing your data if you’re unsure where to begin.

• You may want to take a look at a research journal article that uses qualitative research. This is less for the content and more for how the research is written-up. We are not expecting the same level of depth but you may get some ideas about how themes and quotes are used by qualitative researchers. Suggested journals, depending on your interests, would be Social Science and Medicine; Science, Technology and Human Values; Environment and Planning D: Society and Space. These journals are all electronically available from the library.

• You should be looking to move from three individual interviews to a number of themes that arise across the interviews (either because they refer to the same issues or because contrasting opinions were mentioned). As you read and identify themes you will want to code them (with coloured highlighters, or by cut and paste into individual Word documents named after each theme, or quite literally cutting up paragraphs and putting them in envelopes labelled after each theme) so that you can
read the material thematically rather than chronologically through each interview. Remember to keep a track of which interview each excerpt came from in case you want to refer back to it!

- Note that we are not expecting you to simply repeat back to us the details of the interviewees’ research; rather we want to know what they think about (and how they approach) their research. That said, you may want to do a bit of your own research and reading into the interviewees’ research area and cite this in your write-up – but just remember not to get distracted or bogged down in detail.

Preparing Assignment A1 (individual report):

- You should focus on your group’s findings. You should include quotes from the interviews but make sure you comment on the quotes, draw out how you interpret their significance or how they illustrate themes covered in the lectures.
- Spend less time on discussing the process of carrying out the interviews (methods or methodology) except insofar as you may want to discuss the substance or limits of your interview information.
- NB: YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON JUST TWO OR THREE THEMES ARISING FROM YOUR INTERVIEWS (e.g. what is method? what is a discipline? Academic self-identity etc.). You are more likely to score well by focusing on two or three clearly defined themes than trying to cover more in only 1500 words.
- You can score a good mark by drawing out the similarities and differences between your three interviews. The best marks will be given to students who can relate their interviews to any of the course material that we have covered in lectures.

Preparing Assignment A2 (video diary):

- The video should be a collective project. This does NOT mean that every member of your group should appear on camera: you can contribute to the filming, editing and production of the video, and that will count toward your mark. Your group should make sure that everybody’s contribution to the video is acknowledged – for example in the form of credits at the end of the video.
- The marking will be based on the content of the video rather than the production quality. So in your editing try to focus on creating a clear narrative rather than worrying about overly enhancing any design features.
- The filming should not require sophisticated technology: for this purpose, a mobile phone or computer camera is just as good as a professional camera.
- Ideally, the video should follow the development of your project, so try to do the filming at least on a weekly basis (alternatively you can have short updates every two or three days and edit everything at the end).
- Higher marks will be given to groups whose videos show particular depth in reflecting critically on the methodological challenges arising from the research conducted so far, and link these reflections to some of the course material covered in the lectures.
- There is no need to fill the full 15 minutes – aim for quality not quantity of information. Anything over 10 minutes in length is fine.
Working in groups:

- Make sure you read Chapter 5 in Maier, Barney & Price (2009), *Study skills for science, engineering and technology students* which contains excellent advice for making the most out of working in teams. This resource is available online via UCL’s library – see the module’s online reading list for the appropriate link.

- This task requires you to delegate responsibilities within your groups. Make sure everyone knows what they are meant to be doing, when, where and what your group deadlines are. Careful planning in advance (and with contingency plans in case something goes wrong) can save you a lot of time and angst on this assignment.

- Make sure you know how to communicate with each other out of class – do you all have each other’s contact details? Make sure you choose communication tools (e.g. email, Facebook, Whatsapp, text message) that *everyone* in the group is comfortable with providing AND are likely to check frequently. NOTE: if you use social media or publicly hosted online sites please ensure you set the privacy settings accordingly.

- You might want to consider using a shared space such as Google Docs [https://docs.google.com](https://docs.google.com) to allow all team members to be able to contribute, edit and comment as your work progresses.

- You can book study space (pods) in the Science library if you want to meet as a group out of class time: [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/rm_intro.shtml](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/rm_intro.shtml)

- A useful site to organise dates for meetings, polls etc is [www.doodle.com](http://www.doodle.com)

- As noted on page 3 of this Syllabus, you will have the opportunity to provide (anonymised) feedback to other members of your group regarding their efforts and input. This is designed as a formative feedback opportunity to encourage you to reflect on the group’s progress to date, acknowledge particular strengths in how it is operating, and deal with any problems before embarking on Assignment B within this module.
Milestones for Assignment A

Week commencing 9\textsuperscript{th} January

- Discuss the practicalities of the assignment in the first workshop.
- Draw up a contract within your group describing the expectations you have for working towards completing the assignment (a template for this contract is provided on Moodle).
- Divide up the task and assign roles in your groups.
- Draft a short e-mail requesting an interview from a member of staff. \textit{This should be sent to your workshop tutor for feedback before sending anything out.} You should include the following text at the bottom of your draft email:
  
  This request forms part of the UCL module BASC1002 Interdisciplinary Research Methods. This module is convened by Dr Karen Bultitude in the Department of Science and Technology Studies (karen.bultitude@ucl.ac.uk) and is part of UCL’s efforts towards a Connected Curriculum.

- Start to search the UCL website for potential people to interview, but do not make contact until your request e-mail and list of preferred interviewees has been approved by your workshop tutor.

Week commencing 16\textsuperscript{th} January

- By the day before your workshop (preferably before) your group should have sent at least two things to your workshop tutor:
  - (a) your group contract and
  - (b) a draft e-mail requesting an interview.

  If you are sufficiently organised you can also send through your list of preferred interviewees at this time.

- Once you have feedback on your draft e-mail and list of preferred interviewees (which may be given during your workshop), you can start to send out e-mails and arrange interviews.

- Discuss with your group and workshop tutor strategies for following up if you get no response, what to do if someone can’t be interviewed, locating alternative interviewees ready to approach and any other practical matters.

Week commencing 23\textsuperscript{rd} January

- Continue to work on your assignment, making use of the workshop tutor’s availability to ask for advice or clarifications during the session.

- This week your workshop tutor will also ask you to review your research procedures and ensure that all data collection and storage that you have planned is being conducted in an appropriately ethical manner.

Later workshops

You will have time to discuss practicalities that best suit your group’s needs, for example what questions to ask, how to get the most useful information from a short interview, recording and transcribing, analysing qualitative data etc.

Note that your three interviews need to be conducted \textbf{BEFORE} February 7\textsuperscript{th}. 
Assignment B: Group research proposal and viva

Now that you have conducted some qualitative research yourself, the aim of the second assignment is to take this further, through inviting you to work in your group to design a full research project and persuading the course tutors that it should be funded. The second aim of this assignment relates to your ability to effectively communicate what you’ve learnt over the course. Both your written and oral communication skills will be assessed as follows:

(B1) a written group research proposal (40% of the overall coursemark)
(B2) an oral group viva (10% of the overall coursemark)

You will also have an opportunity to both give and receive formative feedback on your research proposal ideas through a short (2-minute) ‘pitch’ to be presented to the whole class during the final lecture session (March 20th).

The exercise
Let’s say hypothetically that we have £500K to spend and two years to conduct the research. You are invited to propose a research project that has to:

• ... be interdisciplinary
• ... incorporate qualitative research methods

Working in the same groups as per Assignment A, within each group of approximately 6-8 people you will need to:

1. Divide up the responsibilities in order to get the work done.
2. Come up with a research topic, explain why it matters, think about what the big questions are and how research might address them.
3. Come up with a more specific set of research questions and describe the research that you plan to do in order to answer them.
4. Consider what is doable within the timescale and the budget indicated.
5. Prepare a 2-minute ‘pitch’ summarising your main thoughts to present during the lecture session in the last week of class (20 March):
   a) You may use up to 3 PowerPoint slides, which should be uploaded onto Moodle by 09:00 hrs on the Monday of the final lecture (20 March).
   b) Your group will be allocated 3-4 other groups to provide feedback on. This needs to be completed during the lecture session itself using the proformas provided (see Moodle for details). This also means you will receive peer feedback from 3-4 other groups on your ideas, which you can incorporate into your written proposal prior to submission.
   c) You will not be assessed on your pitch but in addition to the peer feedback mentioned above, the course and workshop tutors will give you real-time formative feedback on the pitch, with time to incorporate this into your marked proposal.
6. Bring all the above together in a coherent document summarising your research proposal. The proposal should be no longer than 20 pages in total, and should use the template provided within the “Research proposal form and instructions” document on Moodle.
7. Prepare for your oral group viva (held within your usual workshop session in week
commencing 20th March). The viva will take the form of a group de-briefing session on the course lectures with 2-3 members of the teaching team, and will be approximately 20 minutes long:

a) The first viva question will always be “Will you summarise the main points from one lecture and some of the key questions that arose from the lecture?”. So, as a group agree which lecture you plan to start with, and who will cover the initial response.

b) The discussion can go in any direction from there. It is not expected that everyone will have a chance to speak at length, though we do expect the majority of the group to have something to say. In this respect, you might want to assign aspects of the course to different people, and agree a strategy as to how you will decide who will respond to each question.

Note that your viva assessment is to be treated as an Exam – so you must attend

Top tips for Assignment B

Preparing Assignment B1 (research proposal):

• You need to decide on a topic fairly quickly. The sooner you agree on your group’s focus the longer you will have to complete the various elements required. Places to look for inspiration could include:
  o UCL Grand Challenges [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges]
  o Build on the research topics and/or approaches discussed by your interviewees for Assignment A (though be careful to develop it in a new direction so that you can’t be accused of plagiarism).
  o For examples of research projects currently underway in the UK, funded by the two most relevant Research Councils (with Government money), have a look at publications from ESRC [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-events-and-publications/publications/magazines/society-now-magazine/] and AHRC [http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/newsevents/publications/].
  o Past examples of the slides from previous project pitches are provided on Moodle. Take a look at these early during your discussions of Assignment B1 for inspiration and ideas, and talk about their pros and cons within your group. Which ones do you think were particularly strong in terms of the research ideas? Could you identify any weaknesses in any of their contents?

• Read through the guidance notes provided within the “Research proposal form and instructions” document carefully – this has been designed specifically to help give you an idea of the sorts of content to include in each section.

• Yes, in your final submission you can delete all the guidance notes within the research proposal template in order to give yourself more space for your own content!

• Don’t forget to use the existing literature to help in preparing your project proposal. For example within this module’s online reading list we have recommended:
  o Chapter 2 in Brett Davies (2007), “Let’s Make a Start” contains some useful advice to help you get started in coming up with a research focus.
  o Denscombe (2012), Research Proposals is an online book available via UCL’s library which contains a lot of great advice on formulating a research proposal. In particular Chapter 4 (Aims of the Research), Chapter 6 (Research Questions)
and Chapter 9 (Research Ethics) are very useful for framing your project, though other chapters may also be of interest.

- For other advice specifically relating to research ethics try Farrimond (2013) *Doing Ethical Research* as a good, short introduction. Don’t forget about the research ethics chapter by Smith, Todd & Waldman (2009) from the lecture readings, which is available in the module’s online reading list.
- There are a wide range of other research methods texts which consider how you might approach your research from a variety of angles. You are welcome to draw on whatever texts you find most useful (and do feel free to look beyond those listed in the online reading list), however keep in mind that this assignment is supposed to be about qualitative methods.

- If you are using difficult to access groups you should address practical problems that you might encounter and how you would deal with them. Hint: If you pick a setting (e.g. a school, hospital) or difficult to access group (e.g. recreational drug users, sex workers) you will almost certainly not be the first researchers to have done qualitative research with these groups. Are there any books or journal articles in the library that address the methodological problems you might encounter? You don’t have to come up with solutions to problems that others have solved for you – you can cite their work.
- Your final file for submission needs to be less than 40MB in order to be accepted by TurnItIn – please check this well in advance of submission to be sure you don’t run into any problems.
- When preparing your pitch revisit the examples of previous slides available on Moodle. This time consider how the research was “pitched”: can you learn anything about effective communication from these examples (both visually and in terms of the written content such as the stated research questions)?

**Preparing Assignment B2 (group viva):**

- We are looking for evidence of the group’s engagement with the lectures and readings (rather than a memory test of what was in the lectures) – so you CAN bring your lecture notes with you. However, try to make sure you have some sort of system for finding relevant information if you do intend to rely on your notes, rather than getting distracted by them.
- Vivas will take place in your usual seminar venue in the last week of term. Note your group will only need to attend for half of the seminar slot (you will know which half in advance of the session).
- Note that vivas are formal assessments so we will be under UCL Exam Regulations. This also means that you must be on time. If you are more than 5 minutes late you cannot join your group.
- If you cannot attend due to illness or other urgent circumstances then you must supply documentation.
- Except for students with documented extenuating circumstances, a mark will only be awarded to group members in attendance at the viva.

Teamwork is of course still an important element of Assignment B. Don’t forget to revisit the advice for working in groups, and the anonymised peer feedback you received as part of Assignment A, to inform your approach here.
Milestones for Assignment B

Assignment B will begin immediately after reading week.

**Week commencing 20\(^{th}\) February**
- Discuss the practicalities of the assignment in the first workshop. In particular, you will discuss how to put together a research project.

**Week commencing 27\(^{th}\) February**
- By the end of this week, you should have decided on your research topic and come up with some initial research questions.
- You may want to find out more about alternative methods such as ethnography and focus groups, perhaps by asking your workshop tutor if you can experiment with them in class.

**Week commencing 6\(^{th}\) March**
- This week, you will need to decide on specific research methods.

**Week commencing 13\(^{th}\) March**
- In the workshop, you will be putting the finishing touches to your research proposal. This will need to be submitted by the due date (see earlier in this document).
- By the end of this week you should also have a 2 minute (ONLY) ‘project pitch’ prepared which you will deliver in the final lecture. As noted above, you may use up to 3 PowerPoint slides, which should be uploaded onto Moodle by 09:00 hrs on the Monday of the final lecture (20 March).

**Week commencing 20\(^{th}\) March**
- In your workshops, you will be asked about the lectures (and associated reading) by the course tutors. 10% of your coursemark will be awarded for how well you answer questions.