

**Methodology and Techniques in Social Research**

Code: 44034  
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313228 Social Policy, Employment and Welfare	OB	0	1

## Contact

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## Teaching groups languages

You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject. Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2023.

## Teachers

Jose Pedro Lopez Roldan

Joel Marti Olive

Joan Miquel Verd Pericas

## Prerequisites

It is advisable to study the Advanced Social Research Methods module (MARS) after this module, if the student considers she might apply advanced research methods on her Final Master Thesis (TFM) or if its aim is to develop and expand the knowledge of the research methods applied in the social sciences.

It is also advisable to read academic articles in English.

## Objectives and Contextualisation

Methodology and Techniques for Social Research (MTSR) aims to enable students to acquire the methodological knowledge required to carry out a master's degree and complete the final master's thesis (FMT). It is about students being able to reach the skills to carry out a small research or to make a simple evaluation of a public policy. The students will learn to justify the object of study, define the conceptual framework and the methodological design and to correctly use the appropriate qualitative and quantitative techniques to generate the relevant information and analyze it. On the one hand, the basic tools for empirical research will be provided, either qualitatively or quantitatively, or in combination. The central elements of a research project will be reviewed: how to ask a good research question, how to formulate objectives and working hypotheses from the theoretical review and thus define the sociological problem, and how to make an adequate design. On the other hand, a general review of the existing panorama of quantitative and qualitative

methods will be made. Students will learn to recognize and critically reflect the epistemological and theoretical foundations of these methods, and will acquire the necessary technical knowledge to apply them and perform a rigorous and quality sociological analysis. These general objectives are complemented by 4 specific objectives:

1. To provide the basic concepts to formulate a research question based on existing theoretical knowledge based on published research.
2. To have the knowledge and standards to formulate relevant, concise and verifiable objectives and assumptions.
3. To provide knowledge to develop an appropriate research design, whether in a quantitative, qualitative or mixed orientation.
4. To present the appropriate qualitative or quantitative methodology for obtaining and analyzing the data.

## **Competences**

- Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously.
- Design and conduct research projects on work, gender and social policy, using advanced qualitative and quantitative research techniques.
- Put forward innovative proposals for the relevant field of study.
- Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.
- Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.

## **Learning Outcomes**

1. Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously.
2. Identify the root of a problem, justify research hypotheses and propose an appropriate design..
3. Interpret, apply and identify the repercussions of the different methodological paradigms and their specific methods of social research, for the research model and design and, in particular, to put together a mixed design.
4. Put forward innovative proposals for the relevant field of study.
5. Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.
6. Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.
7. Use the software that allows to analyze the results that correspond to each one of the methods and techniques implemented.

## **Content**

The contents of the module are structured around three thematic sections:

1. Research Design (professors Mireia Bolívar, Pedro López and Joel Martí) (20 hours)

The general objective of this blog is to start master students in the world of social science research. We want to consider a reflection on what it means to research in the social sciences and to provide the tools to know how to do it. The fundamental interests of the block are oriented towards clarifying the basic requirements of the scientific methodology, the concepts and instruments of the applied research to the analysis of the social reality and the routines and basic instrumental abilities that allow to develop the " research activity The organization of the blog will thus be oriented to make explicit what are the central elements that allow to do sociological research, as well as to transmit to the students the necessary knowledge to build a research or

diagnostic object and prepare the corresponding research design. In this sense, it is essential to know the main sources of information and scientific documentation, acquire basic research habits in the social sciences, and learn a rigorous work style, capable of combining the use of recognized criteria by the scientific community with personal creativity.

The key elements of social research design will be reviewed, and different types of research designs will be presented, for qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies, as well as public policy evaluation.

## 2. Qualitative methods (professor Joan Miquel Verd) (6 hours)

This block offers an overview and basic knowledge of two of the most important qualitative data collection methods in the social sciences, such as the qualitative interview and the use of documents. In addition, it is also intended to offer the basic knowledge for the correct and rigorous analysis of qualitative data. To do this, one of the most used qualitative data analysis methods will be presented, such as qualitative content analysis (also known as thematic analysis).

The objectives of the block are four. The first is that students know the main existing variants of the above mentioned data collection methods. The second is that students learn to select the method and its most appropriate variant based on the object of study and the research question. The third objective is that students acquire sufficient technical knowledge of each method for its correct use and, with this, to be able to collect valid and quality qualitative data. Finally, the objective is also for students to learn a rigorous data analysis method and thus to be able to carry out valid interpretations supported by the data.

## 3. Quantitative methods (Professors Pedro López and Joan Miquel Verd) (6 hours)

The general objective of this block is to offer an overview of the main characteristics of the analysis models and analysis designs from a quantitative methodological perspective and to deal with the most basic techniques of univariate descriptive and exploratory analysis, as well as the fundamentals of inferential statistics and the contrasting of hypotheses. The conceptual foundation of the contents will be given with an applied and practical orientation. The purpose of the training is for students to acquire sufficient knowledge so that they can apply it in their research, as well as provide the bases for its subsequent expansion. The training will involve learning the formalization aspects of this methodology, the main objective being the understanding and interpretation of the information they generate in order to understand the publications that make use of this methodology, as well as to carry out an applied study. A session will also be offered to learn how to quantitatively analyse qualitative data: specifically, this session will address quantitative content analysis. In relation to the analysis techniques, the basic notions of the SPSS software for the treatment and analysis of quantitative data will be introduced. The content of this part of the module will be continued in the second semester of the master's degree in the advanced methodology module where bivariate analysis techniques and introduction to multivariables, those related to social network analysis and social simulation will be discussed.

## CONTENT

### Introduction

#### 1. Basic research concepts

What is a sociological problem?

Positioning of the researcher and stages of a research

#### 2. The research process in social sciences

Building a research object and formulating research questions.

The exploration. Collection and systematization of information.

Elaborating the state of the art.

### Methodological design

#### 3. Introduction to research design

The model of analysis. Definition of key concepts. Delimitation of research hypotheses.

Research design overview: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.

#### 4. Qualitative design decisions

The research question and the type of information sought

Field and sample in qualitative research

The type of information provided by the different qualitative methods

#### 5. Quantitative design decisions

5.1. Process and dynamics in quantitative research

5.2. Models of analysis and analysis designs

5.2.1. Attributive models

5.2.2. Reticular models

5.2.3. Experimental models

5.2.4. Simulation models

5.2.5. Analysis and validity designs

5.3. Measurement in Social Sciences: characteristics and process

5.4. Using surveys to produce information

5.5. Statistical sampling

#### 6. The methodological articulation in mixed methods research designs

Challenges and theoretical-methodological debates around the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods

Designs and forms of multi-method articulation

#### 7. The evaluation of public policy

Why do we need to perform evaluations? Purposes, recipients and perspectives

Theory of change in social policies and programs

Type of evaluations

Quantitative, qualitative and participatory evaluation methods

Data collection and analysis

#### 8. The qualitative interview

Fundamentals and general characteristics

Selection of the sample and types of interviews

The script and aspects of development

Potentialities and limitations

#### 9. The use of documents

Definition and general characteristics

The selection of the type and corpus of documents

Potentialities and limitations

#### 10. The analysis of statistical data

10.1. Classification of analysis techniques

10.2. Descriptive and exploratory analysis of univariable data

10.3. Fundamentals of inferential statistics

10.4. The statistical software. Introduction to SPSS

#### 11. The analysis of qualitative data

Qualitative content analysis

Quantitative analysis of textual data

## Methodology

The section will combine participatory master lectures with reading sections, practical exercises and sessions in the computer class. Lecturers will seek the participation of students by providing topics for discussion and

examples from their research experience. They will provide adequate empirical material to be analyzed with the procedures corresponding to each sections. Students will also be asked to be able to analyze their own data, whether they are produced by themselves or coming from secondary sources.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

## Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Lectures	32	1.28	3, 5
Type: Supervised			
Office Hours	6	0.24	1, 2, 4
Project monitoring	10	0.4	1, 2, 3, 4
Type: Autonomous			
Completion of assignments	70	2.8	2, 3, 6, 7
Hands-on exercises	12	0.48	1, 2, 3
Readings	20	0.8	1, 3, 5, 6

## Assessment

The evaluation will be carried out mainly through the design of a social research project. This will demonstrate the student's ability to transfer the knowledge acquired to the formulation of a research proposal that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It is recommended that the assignment focuses on the subject of Final Master Thesis so that it serves to begin to consider its research design. The project will be developed throughout the semester and will give rise to the delivery of two deliverables. The first, in which the general approach and research design will be presented, will be worth 40%. The second, which will be delivered after receiving the correction of the first, will design the application of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and will be worth 50% of the grade. The remaining 10% will be assessed based on attendance and participation in classroom exercises and debates.

To appear for the reassessment, you must have suspended the previous assessments.

## Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Attendance and participation in class exercises and debates	10%	0	0	2, 3, 4, 5, 7
Design of a research project proposal. Part 1: General approach and global design	40%	0	0	1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Design of a research project proposal. Part 2: Quantitative and qualitative methods' applications	50%	0	0	1, 2, 3, 6, 7
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### Additional bibliography:

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## Software

SPSS will be introduced and examples with ATLAS.ti will appear in class.