

# IP901-20 Creating Knowledge for Change: Transdisciplinary Approaches

21/22

**Department**

Liberal Arts

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Kirsten Harris

**Credit value**

20

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module interrogates the principles and practice of mixed methods research for problem-solving and change-making. Through the use of case studies, real-world examples, and hands-on experience, students will explore and evaluate the scope, value and limitations of different and combined approaches for knowledge generation. Through this process, students will gain a practical understanding of flexible processes for developing and managing research projects, a core toolkit of research skills and an advanced understanding of the ontological and epistemological factors which underpin methodological choices. Students will further develop their ability to critically engage with theoretical and applied principles of mixed methods research in order to design research interventions that respond in nuanced, robust and imaginative ways to complex and systemic problems.

### Module aims

This module aims to:

- Introduce and demonstrate the principles of, and models for, good research project management and design, and introduce students to the principles of project evaluation

- Develop students' knowledge about the theoretical principles and academic debates underpinning the selection and use of different research methods to find, generate, evaluate, and interpret data
- Provide students with a toolkit of practical research skills, and an understanding of how these can be purposefully combined to construct knowledge which transcends that generated by any single approach
- Demonstrate how mixed methods research can interrogate the intersection between lived experience, textual discourses, systems of signification, and quantifiable actions
- Foster an advanced awareness of the ethical implications associated with different methodologies, and the importance of ethical considerations in research design
- Encourage students to draw on diverse perspectives and methodological lenses to create positive solutions and knowledge for change

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

This module interrogates the principles and practice of mixed methods research for problem-solving and change-making. Through the use of case studies, real-world examples, and hands-on experience, students will explore and evaluate the scope, value and limitations of different and combined approaches for knowledge generation. Through this process, students will gain a practical understanding of the process for developing and managing research projects, a core toolkit of research skills and an advanced understanding of the ontological and epistemological factors which underpin methodological choices. Students will further develop their ability to critically engage with theoretical and applied principles of mixed methods research in order to design research interventions that respond in nuanced, robust and imaginative ways to complex and systemic problems.

The course will be structured around relevant and topical case studies, datasets, and sources. Students will first explore the key principles and academic debates underpinning mixed methods research. Discussions around methodology and method will be connected to theory and philosophy in social and cultural inquiry. In addition to problematizing the paradigms of quantitative and qualitative research, the module will also ask students to problematize the assumptions of mixed methods research. For example, does a mixed method paradigm privilege post-positivism over interpretive, qualitative approaches? Does the language of mixed methods research appropriately reflect both quantitative and qualitative approaches?

Over the course of the module, students will develop their knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods and interpretive strategies (e.g. analysing survey and observational data, sourcing secondary datasets, quantitative content analysis, interviews, surveys, observation, visual and verbal source-text analysis, discourse analysis) and methodologies (e.g. descriptive versus correlational and inferential statistics, the “linguistic turn” in cultural and social research, ethnography, historicism). The module will examine how qualitative and quantitative methods have been combined in real research contexts; for example, ethnographic research that draws on cultural methodologies and data about frequency of actions and speech.

To complement this theoretical and practical training, students will engage with ideas concerning

best-practice in designing and managing research projects; providing them with the confidence to pursue individual research which, in addition to being informed by the theoretical and practical principles of their chosen method, features robust design and consideration for process, execution, and evaluation.

The implications of combined modes of inquiry for change-making will be explored through historic and current case studies; for example, by interrogating how mixed methods research may influence the formation of social, political and cultural policy. Finally, students will be introduced to advanced ethical considerations and research project design.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Assess the scope, value and limitations of a range of single and mixed research methods
- Make informed choices around appropriate research methods, based on a range of contextual and theoretical factors
- Articulate an understanding of the ontological and epistemological factors which underpin methodological choices
- Demonstrate competence in core qualitative skills such as source-text analysis, surveys and interview methods
- Demonstrate an ability to effectively design a research project by constructively combining appropriate methods
- Demonstrate cognitive and meta-cognitive skills such as critical thinking and analysis, planning how to approach a learning task, and identifying appropriate strategies to solve a problem
- Demonstrate an understanding of best-practice in the planning and management of research projects

## **Indicative reading list**

Becker, H. S. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bickman, L. and Brannen, J., eds (2008) *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Bryman, A. (2015) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buckingham, A. and Saunders, P. (2004) *The Survey Methods Workbook*. Cambridge: Polity.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. London: Sage.

Dean, J. (2017). *Doing Reflexivity: An Introduction*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Diamond, I. and Jefferies, J. (2004) *Beginning Statistics: An Introduction for Social Scientists*. London: Sage.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.

Morgan, D. (2014). *Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: A Pragmatic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

King, G., Keohane, R. and Verba, S. (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*. London: Wiley.
- Rose, G. (2001). *Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: Sage.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. London: Sage.
- Rowntree, D. (2018) *Statistics without Tears: An Introduction for Non-Mathematicians*. London: Penguin.
- Van Leeuwen, T., & Jewitt, C. (Eds.). (2001). *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: Sage.

## **Research element**

Healey & Jenkins (2009) propose that Research-led-teaching design should consider four discrete opportunities. This module has been designed to include the first three of these opportunities.

1. Research-led learning, where the module syllabus is developed from current research in relevant fields, being based on contemporary and seminal, peer reviewed and other high quality research literature.  
As such, all knowledge for student engagement will be consciously and specifically chosen for its merits in reference to broader academic understanding.
2. Research-tutored learning, where students engage actively in discussing high quality, contemporary and seminal research literature. In exploring this module's case studies, and critical discussion around methodology, students will engage with high quality contemporary and seminal academic literature.
3. Research-orientated learning, where students are actively taught methodological understanding and skills for the independent creation of new knowledge. This module expressly provides students with the practical and conceptual understanding required to carry out well-considered and robustly-designed independent research.
4. Research-based learning, where student use developing methodological skills to create original knowledge of their own. Though students will not use the methodological skills acquired for the independent creation of knowledge in this particular module, successful completion of it will enable them to do so in other master's level modules.

## **Interdisciplinary**

Positive global transformations are widely recognised to require transdisciplinary approaches. This module has been designed according to our signature problem-based, response-focused pedagogy, and as such will draw on transdisciplinary knowledge, pedagogy and methodologies in the design and delivery of learning opportunities.

This module is expressly designed to provide students with skills and understanding which can be applied flexibly to a range of disciplinary contexts, while authentic assessment methods will require students to demonstrate transdisciplinary aptitude in tasks which are reflective of the practical application and critical evaluation of research design and implementation. Transdisciplinary aptitude will be explicitly embedded in relevant marking rubrics, as adapted from the standard university scale and descriptors.

## International

This is a module on the Master's in Global Sustainable Development which offers transdisciplinary, global and culturally-specific perspectives, allowing students to achieve breadth and depth of knowledge.

## Subject specific skills

As a transdisciplinary module, all skills associated with it are inherently transferable and are outlined below.

## Transferable skills

Fundamental principles of quantitative research approaches (methodological, ontological, epistemological)

Fundamental principles of qualitative research approaches (methodological, ontological, epistemological)

Fundamental principles of mixed methods research approaches (methodological, ontological, epistemological)

Fundamental principles of research project design, management, and evaluation

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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (10%)
Practical classes	3 sessions of 2 hours (3%)
Private study	60 hours (30%)
Assessment	114 hours (57%)
Total	200 hours

### Private study description

Approximately 6 hours per week private study including reading, preparing for practical computer-based exercises, preparing tasks set for weekly taught sessions

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
Quantitative assessment Take-home assignment: 1500 words	20%	15 hours
Critical Rationale for research project plan Reflective and evaluative essay connecting theory, methodology and practice.	30%	37 hours
Mixed methods research project plan including application for ethical approval Applied assessment: research project design, including the selection of different methodologies, ethical considerations, and the demonstration of principles of good research design.	30%	37 hours
Advanced source-text interpretation Analytical essay: 2000 words	20%	25 hours

### Feedback on assessment

Written feedback will be provided for all assessments. Student's will be given the opportunity for verbal feedback. Where possible, peer-feedback methods will be employed.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of TGDA-L801 Postgraduate Taught Global Sustainable Development