

VU LEARNING HUB

vulearninghub.xyz

HIGHLIGHTED HANDOUT

EDU713

Qualitative Research Methods in Education

EDU713 by VU Learning HUB

Prepared for VU students • Free study resources

<https://vulearninghub.xyz>

EDU713

Qualitative Research Methods in Education

This handout covers the complete course topic by topic in simple, exam-focused language. Each chapter begins with learning objectives and ends with key points and exam pointers. Definitions are boxed in green-friendly format, examples are worked out step by step, and very important exam points are flagged separately. Study the highlighted points carefully before your papers.



Course Information	
Course Code	EDU713
Course Title	Qualitative Research Methods in Education
Credit Hours	3
Level	MS/PhD

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
1. Foundations of Qualitative Research	3
2. Qualitative Research Designs	4
3. Sampling and Research Questions	6
4. Data Collection: Interviews	8
5. Data Collection: Observation and Documents	10
6. Data Analysis I: Coding	11
7. Data Analysis II: Trustworthiness	13
8. Writing the Qualitative Report	15
9. Ethics in Qualitative Research	17
10. Mixed Methods and Proposal Writing	18
Glossary of Key Terms	20
Practice Questions for Exams	20
MCQ Practice Test	25
Exam Strategy Guide 	30

1. Foundations of Qualitative Research

Learning Objectives

- Define qualitative research and its purpose
- Contrast qualitative and quantitative paradigms

Qualitative research is defined as an inquiry approach that explores and understands the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems, using words and images rather than numbers.

Dimension	Qualitative	Quantitative
Purpose	Explore meaning, processes	Test hypotheses, measure
Data	Words, images, observations	Numbers, statistics
Sample	Small, purposeful	Large, random
Researcher role	Key instrument, reflexive	Detached, objective
Design	Emergent, flexible	Fixed, structured
Setting	Naturalistic	Controlled
Report	Narrative, thick description	Statistical tables

- Ontology: multiple constructed realities; epistemology: knowledge co-created by researcher and participants.
- Used when: exploring new phenomena, understanding processes, giving voice to participants — e.g. why teachers resist a new curriculum.

Key Points to Remember

- Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Reproduce the qualitative-quantitative comparison on any four dimensions.

When NOT to use qualitative research

- When you need prevalence or causation at scale.
- When the question is "how many" not "how".
- Mixed methods can bridge the gap.

Positivism vs interpretivism

- Positivism: single reality, measurable; interpretivism: multiple meanings.
- Post-positivism softens positivism with fallibilism.
- Critical theory adds emancipation goals.

Ontology-epistemology link

- What exists shapes how we can know it.
- Constructivism: knowledge is co-constructed.
- State your stance in chapter one.

Pilot studies

- Test guides, timing, and recording on 2-3 participants.
- Pilots save main-study disasters.
- Report pilot changes in the thesis.

Ontology and epistemology

- Ontology asks what reality is; epistemology asks how we know it.
- Qualitative work leans constructivist: multiple realities.
- Your stance shapes every later choice.
- State it explicitly in proposals.
- Examiners reward philosophical clarity.

Positivism vs interpretivism

- Positivism seeks laws; interpretivism seeks meaning.
- Qualitative research lives in the interpretive camp.
- Neither is "better" — fit decides.
- Mixed methods bridge the divide.
- Know which paradigm your question needs.

2. Qualitative Research Designs

Learning Objectives

- Describe five major qualitative designs
- Match research questions to designs

Design	Focus	Typical question
Narrative	Stories of individuals	How do teachers narrate their career journeys?
Phenomenology	Lived experience of a phenomenon	What is it like to be a first-generation university student?
Grounded theory	Build theory from data	What process explains student dropout?
Ethnography	Culture of a group	What is the culture of this school?
Case study	In-depth bounded system	How did this school implement the new policy?

- Narrative: collects stories, restories them chronologically.
- Phenomenology: brackets researcher assumptions; seeks the essence of experience (interviews with 5-25 people).
- Grounded theory: constant comparison; theoretical sampling until saturation; ends in a theory.
- Ethnography: prolonged fieldwork, participant observation of a culture-sharing group.
- Case study: bounded by time and place; multiple data sources converge.

Key Points to Remember

- Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- Case study is bounded; ethnography is cultural.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Given a research question, identify the right design and justify — the applied favourite.

Phenomenology in education

- Studies: first-generation students, teacher burnout.
- Bracketing: set aside your assumptions explicitly.
- Essence: the invariant structure of experience.

Autoethnography

- Researcher's own experience as data.
- Powerful for teacher identity studies.
- Vulnerability is the method's strength and risk.

Case study types

- Intrinsic, instrumental, collective (Stake).
- Single vs multiple cases.
- Bound the case explicitly.

Longitudinal qualitative

- Follow participants over time.
- Reveals processes, not snapshots.
- Attrition is the main threat.

Phenomenology essentials

- Studies lived experience of a phenomenon.
- Bracketing suspends researcher preconceptions.
- Small, purposeful samples (5-25).
- Moustakas and Van Manen are key names.
- Findings describe the essence of experience.

Grounded theory variants

- Glaserian: emergence; Straussian: structured coding.
- Constructivist (Charmaz): co-constructed theory.
- Theoretical sampling drives data collection.
- Saturation ends sampling.
- Result is a theory, not just themes.

3. Sampling and Research Questions

Learning Objectives

- Explain purposeful sampling strategies
- Write good qualitative research questions

Purposeful sampling strategies

- Maximum variation: capture diverse perspectives.
- Homogeneous: focus on a subgroup in depth.
- Typical / extreme / critical case sampling.
- Snowball: participants refer others (hidden populations).

- Criterion sampling: all cases meeting a criterion.
- Theoretical sampling (grounded theory): sample driven by emerging theory until saturation — the point where new data adds nothing new.

Research questions

- Start broad and exploratory: "how" and "what" questions, not "why" causal ones.
- Central question + 5-7 sub-questions aligned to it.
- Example: "What are rural female teachers' experiences of professional development?"
- Questions may evolve as the study unfolds — flexibility is a strength, not a flaw.

Key Points to Remember

- Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases.
- Saturation, not sample size, decides when to stop.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Define saturation and explain how it replaces statistical power.

Gatekeepers and access

- Headteachers, DEOs control school access in Pakistan.
- Build trust before requesting interviews.
- Offer findings back to participants.

Sampling continued

- Sample size: 12-30 interviews typical for theses.
- Stop at saturation, not at a magic number.
- Document your sampling logic.

Elite interviewing

- Policymakers need concise, respectful approaches.
- Do homework — elites detect ignorance fast.
- Shorter, sharper guides work.

Telephone vs face-to-face

- Phone: cheaper, wider reach; loses nonverbals.
- Video calls split the difference.
- Choose by sensitivity of topic.

Research question hallmarks

- Open-ended, exploratory wording.
- One central question plus sub-questions.
- Evolves as the study proceeds.
- Avoids yes/no formulations.
- Aligns with the chosen design.

Sample size in qualitative work

- No power calculations — saturation rules.
- Typical: 5-30 interviews.
- Heterogeneous samples need more.
- Justify the number in proposals.
- "It depends" is an acceptable, honest answer.

4. Data Collection: Interviews

Learning Objectives

- Compare interview types
- Conduct and record effective interviews

Type	Structure	Best for
Structured	Fixed questions, fixed order	Comparability across many respondents
Semi-structured	Guide with probes, flexible order	Most qualitative studies — depth with focus
Unstructured	Conversation-like	Exploratory, life histories

Interview craft

- Build rapport; start with easy descriptive questions.
- Use probes: "Tell me more", "Give an example", "What was that like?"
- Ask open questions; avoid leading, double-barrelled and jargon questions.
- Record (with consent), take field notes on nonverbals, transcribe verbatim.
- Very important for exams: pilot-test the interview guide before fieldwork. 

Key Points to Remember

- Semi-structured interviews are the workhorse of qualitative research.
- Probing turns answers into data.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Convert three closed questions into open, probe-ready ones.

Focus groups

- 6-10 participants, skilled moderator, 1-2 hours.
- Group dynamics reveal norms, not just opinions.
- Dominant voices need managing.

Interview transcription

- Verbatim for discourse; intelligent verbatim for themes.
- Transcribe yourself — analysis begins there.
- Urdu interviews: translate carefully, keep originals.

Visual methods

- Photovoice: participants photograph their reality.
- Powerful with marginalized groups.
- Discuss images in interviews.

Secondary qualitative data

- Archives, diaries, existing interview sets.
- Ethical reuse needs fresh consent consideration.
- Saves fieldwork costs.

Probing techniques

- Silent probes: pause and wait.
- Echo probes: repeat the last words.
- Elaboration probes: "tell me more".
- Clarification probes resolve ambiguity.
- Over-probing distorts natural talk.

Focus group dynamics

- 6-10 participants is the sweet spot.
- Interaction is the data, not just answers.
- Dominant voices need gentle management.
- Homogeneity encourages openness.
- Not a group interview — facilitate discussion.

5. Data Collection: Observation and Documents

Learning Objectives

- Describe observation roles
- Use documents and audiovisual materials

Observation roles

- Complete participant: covert insider; complete observer: detached outsider.
- Participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant: the common middle grounds.
- Record: descriptive notes (what happened) separate from reflective notes (your reactions).
- Challenges: observer effect (Hawthorne), selective attention, ethics of covert roles.

Documents and audiovisual data

- Public documents: policies, curricula, newspapers; private: diaries, lesson plans, student work.
- Advantages: unobtrusive, ready-made, historical reach; disadvantages: incomplete, authenticity questions.
- Photos, videos, classroom artefacts enrich triangulation.

Key Points to Remember

- Separate description from interpretation in field notes.
- Multiple sources enable triangulation.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: List four observer roles with one ethical risk of each.

Field note techniques

- Jottings in field, full notes within 24 hours.

- Separate description, analysis, and reflection.
- Sketch maps of classroom layouts.

Observation checklists

- Structured: count behaviours; unstructured: capture context.
- Pilot the schedule before full use.
- Combine with interviews for depth.

Discourse analysis

- Studies language as social action.
- Policy documents reveal power relations.
- Technical but rewarding.

Metasynthesis

- Synthesize findings across qualitative studies.
- Like meta-analysis for words.
- Growing in education research.

Field notes structure

- Descriptive notes: what happened.
- Reflective notes: what you thought.
- Record promptly — memory fades fast.
- Note the ordinary, not just the dramatic.
- Date and contextualize every entry.

Document analysis

- Policies, diaries, minutes, media.
- Unobtrusive — no reactivity.
- Assess authenticity and bias.
- Triangulates interview claims.
- Access permissions take time.

6. Data Analysis I: Coding

Learning Objectives

- Explain open, axial and selective coding
- Code a transcript excerpt

The coding process (grounded-theory tradition)

- Open coding: break data into segments, label concepts ("teacher frustration with workload").
- Axial coding: relate categories — conditions, actions, consequences.
- Selective coding: integrate around a core category into a storyline/theory.
- In-vivo codes use participants' own words; a codebook keeps definitions consistent.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke)

- Familiarize -> generate initial codes -> search for themes -> review themes -> define and name -> write up.
- Themes capture patterned meaning, not just topic summaries.
- Use software (NVivo, MAXQDA) or manual matrices; software organizes, it does not analyse.

Example

Transcript: "I stay up marking until 2am." Open code: excessive marking load. Axial link: workload (condition) -> exhaustion (consequence). Theme: "The invisible labour of teaching."

Key Points to Remember

- Coding = labelling meaning; themes = patterned answers to the research question.
- Analysis is iterative, not linear.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Code a given paragraph: show two open codes and one emerging theme.

Coding software tips

- NVivo organizes; you still interpret.
- Start manual, then move to software.
- Memos capture insights as they strike.

Narrative analysis

- Labov's structure: abstract, orientation, complication, resolution.
- Restorying preserves chronology.
- Teachers' career stories suit this design.

Theoretical saturation

- No new categories emerging.
- Distinct from data saturation.
- Grounded theory's stopping rule.

CAQDAS beyond coding

- Query, visualize, map relationships.
- Don't let tools drive questions.
- Learn one tool deeply.

In vivo coding

- Uses participants' exact words as codes.
- Preserves their voice and meaning.
- Suits studies honouring participant language.
- Generate many, then consolidate.
- Saldaña's manual is the standard reference.

Theme development

- Themes capture patterned meaning, not just topics.
- Review against coded extracts and the dataset.
- Name themes memorably and precisely.
- Fewer, deeper themes beat many thin ones.
- Thematic maps visualize relationships.

7. Data Analysis II: Trustworthiness

Learning Objectives

- Define credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability
- Apply validation strategies

Quantitative criterion	Qualitative parallel	Strategy
Internal validity	Credibility	Triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement
External validity	Transferability	Thick description for reader judgement
Reliability	Dependability	Audit trail, peer debriefing
Objectivity	Confirmability	Reflexivity, audit trail

- Triangulation: multiple sources, methods, investigators or theories converge.
- Member checking: participants verify interpretations.
- Negative case analysis: actively seek disconfirming evidence.
- Reflexivity: researcher examines their own biases (memos, journals) — very important for exams: the researcher is the instrument, so bias management is explicit.

Key Points to Remember

- Trustworthiness replaces validity/reliability vocabulary.
- Thick description lets readers judge transferability.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Match each threat to rigour with its trustworthiness strategy.

Thick description example

- Not "she was angry" but the clenched fists, the silence.
- Context lets readers judge transferability.
- Write so readers feel present.

Audit trails

- Keep: raw data, coding decisions, memos, drafts.
- An auditor should trace every claim.
- Digital folders beat shoeboxes.

Member checking pitfalls

- Participants may disagree with analysis — that's data too.
- Don't surrender interpretation entirely.
- Use as dialogue, not validation stamp.

Crystallization

- Alternative to triangulation: multiple facets, not convergence.
- Postmodern take on validity.
- Know the debate exists.

Audit trails

- Document every analytic decision.
- Raw data to findings must be traceable.
- Supports dependability judgments.
- External auditors can verify the trail.
- Start the trail on day one.

Member checking limits

- Participants may disagree with analysis.
- Memory and perspective shift over time.
- Use as one strategy among several.
- Document disagreements honestly.
- Not a validity stamp.

8. Writing the Qualitative Report

Learning Objectives

- Structure a qualitative report
- Use evidence and narrative effectively

- Structure: introduction, literature, methods (design, sampling, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, ethics), findings, discussion, conclusion.
- Findings: themes as headings, rich participant quotes as evidence, pseudonyms protect identity.
- Balance description and interpretation — show data, then tell what it means.
- Reflexive statement: position yourself (a teacher studying teachers sees differently).
- Visuals: models of the theory, matrices, participant profiles.

Key Points to Remember

- Quotes are evidence, not decoration — analyse each one.
- Methods section must let others audit your trail.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Outline a methods chapter for a phenomenological study.

Writing findings

- One theme per section; lead with the claim.
- Quotes evidence, then your interpretation.
- Negative cases strengthen credibility.

Reflexivity practices

- Research journal from day one.
- State your positionality in the thesis.
- Peer debriefing exposes blind spots.

Writing style

- First person is acceptable and honest.
- Present tense brings scenes alive.
- Avoid jargon where plain words work.

Vignettes in reports

- Short scenes illustrate themes vividly.
- Composite vignettes protect identity.
- Readers remember stories.

Writing thick description

- Context-rich detail enables transferability.
- Show, don't just tell.
- Weave quotes into interpretation.
- Balance description with analysis.
- Readers should feel present in the setting.

Reflexivity practices

- Research journals track your influence.
- Positionality statements disclose standpoint.
- Peer debriefing challenges blind spots.
- Subjectivity managed, not eliminated.
- Examiners look for genuine reflexivity.

9. Ethics in Qualitative Research

Learning Objectives

- Apply ethical principles to fieldwork
- Handle sensitive situations

- Informed consent: voluntary, comprehensible, ongoing — re-consent as focus shifts.
- Confidentiality vs anonymity: protect identities (pseudonyms, disguised settings); anonymity means even the researcher cannot link data.
- Do no harm: sensitive topics (abuse, failure) need care, referrals, right to withdraw.
- Power relations: studying one's own students or subordinates needs extra safeguards.
- Institutional review boards (IRB/ethics committees) approve proposals; gatekeepers grant site access.

Very important for exams: process consent matters more than a signed form — qualitative designs evolve, so consent must be renegotiated when new directions emerge. 

Key Points to Remember

- Ethics is continuous, not a one-time signature.
- Protecting participants outweighs rich data.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: A participant reveals cheating by colleagues — what are your ethical obligations?

Research with children

- Assent from children PLUS consent from parents.
- Use drawings and play-based methods.
- Extra care with power imbalance.

Anonymization techniques

- Pseudonyms, composite characters, disguised sites.
- Remove indirect identifiers (rare roles).
- Small communities need extra care.

Ethics committees in Pakistan

- HEC requires ethics review for funded research.
- University boards vary in strictness.
- Apply early — approval takes weeks.

Feminist methodology

- Centres women's voices; challenges power.
- Relevant for girls' education research.
- Ethics of care throughout.

Informed consent in practice

- Ongoing process, not a one-time form.
- Explain in the participant's language.
- Right to withdraw without penalty.
- Special care with vulnerable groups.
- Document consent carefully.

Anonymity techniques

- Pseudonyms for people and places.
- Alter identifying details carefully.
- Aggregate small subgroups.
- Secure storage with limited access.
- Deductive disclosure is the hidden risk.

10. Mixed Methods and Proposal Writing

Learning Objectives

- Describe mixed-methods designs
- Draft a qualitative proposal skeleton

Mixed-methods designs

- Convergent: qualitative + quantitative collected together, results merged.
- Explanatory sequential: quantitative first, qualitative explains the numbers.
- Exploratory sequential: qualitative first, builds the instrument or theory tested next.
- Justify mixing: triangulation, complementarity, development, expansion.

Proposal skeleton

- Title, background and problem statement, research questions, significance.
- Literature review, theoretical framework, methodology (design, site, sampling, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, ethics, timeline).
- Pakistani context notes: language of interviews (Urdu/English translation issues), gender norms in field access, permissions from education departments.

Key Points to Remember

- Mixed methods must justify why one method is insufficient.
- A proposal sells rigour before data exists.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Choose a mixed-methods design for "survey + teacher interviews on assessment reform" and justify.

Publishing qualitative work

- Pakistani journals: PJERE, JRTE accept qualitative studies.
- International: Qualitative Inquiry, BERJ.
- Write methods transparently for reviewers.

Thesis structure tips

- Methods chapter: justify every choice.
- Findings before discussion — don't mix.
- Appendices: guides, consent forms, sample transcripts.

Exam revision checklist

- Five designs table, sampling strategies, coding stages.
- Trustworthiness criteria, ethics principles.
- One applied: match question to design.

Getting feedback

- Supervisor, peers, participants — in that order.
- Defend choices with methodology literature.
- Revise without losing your voice.

Writing a qualitative proposal

- Problem, purpose, questions, design, methods.
- Anticipate trustworthiness and ethics.

- Budget time generously — fieldwork expands.
- Pilot the instruments.
- Committees probe alignment hardest.

Convergent design

- Collect QUAN and QUAL simultaneously.
- Merge in interpretation.
- Weighing decisions must be justified.
- Divergence is a finding, not a failure.
- Needs expertise in both traditions.

Glossary of Key Terms

Learning Objectives

- Revise all key terms quickly before exams

Term	Meaning
Qualitative research	an inquiry approach that explores and understands the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems, using words and images rather than num...

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Revise this glossary the night before the paper.

Practice Questions for Exams

Learning Objectives

- Test your preparation with these exam-style questions

Short questions with model answers

Example

Q: Explain: define qualitative research and its purpose
Model answer: Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Example

Q: Explain: contrast qualitative and quantitative paradigms Model answer: Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Example

Q: Explain: describe five major qualitative designs Model answer: Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory. Case study is bounded; ethnography is cultural.

Example

Q: Explain: match research questions to designs Model answer: Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory. Case study is bounded; ethnography is cultural.

Example

Q: Explain: explain purposeful sampling strategies Model answer: Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases. Saturation, not sample size, decides when to stop.

Example

Q: Explain: write good qualitative research questions Model answer: Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases. Saturation, not sample size, decides when to stop.

Example

Q: Explain: compare interview types Model answer: Semi-structured interviews are the workhorse of qualitative research. Probing turns answers into data.

Example

Q: Explain: conduct and record effective interviews Model answer: Semi-structured interviews are the workhorse of qualitative research. Probing turns answers into data.

Example

Q: Explain: describe observation roles Model answer: Separate description from interpretation in field notes. Multiple sources enable triangulation.

Example

Q: Explain: use documents and audiovisual materials Model answer: Separate description from interpretation in field notes. Multiple sources enable triangulation.

Example

Q: Explain: explain open, axial and selective coding Model answer: Coding = labelling meaning; themes = patterned answers to the research question. Analysis is iterative, not linear.

Example

Q: Explain: code a transcript excerpt Model answer: Coding = labelling meaning; themes = patterned answers to the research question. Analysis is iterative, not linear.

Example

Q: Explain: define credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability Model answer: Trustworthiness replaces validity/reliability vocabulary. Thick description lets readers judge transferability.

Example

Q: Explain: apply validation strategies Model answer: Trustworthiness replaces validity/reliability vocabulary. Thick description lets readers judge transferability.

Example

Q: Explain: structure a qualitative report Model answer: Quotes are evidence, not decoration — analyse each one. Methods section must let others audit your trail.

Example

Q: Explain: use evidence and narrative effectively Model answer: Quotes are evidence, not decoration — analyse each one. Methods section must let others audit your trail.

Example

Q: Explain: apply ethical principles to fieldwork Model answer: Ethics is continuous, not a one-time signature. Protecting participants outweighs rich data.

Example

Q: Explain: handle sensitive situations Model answer: Ethics is continuous, not a one-time signature. Protecting participants outweighs rich data.

Example

Q: Explain: describe mixed-methods designs Model answer: Mixed methods must justify why one method is insufficient. A proposal sells rigour before data exists.

Example

Q: Explain: draft a qualitative proposal skeleton Model answer: Mixed methods must justify why one method is insufficient. A proposal sells rigour before data exists.

Long questions

- Write a detailed note on Foundations of Qualitative Research.
- Write a detailed note on Qualitative Research Designs.
- Write a detailed note on Sampling and Research Questions.
- Write a detailed note on Data Collection: Interviews.
- Write a detailed note on Data Collection: Observation and Documents.
- Write a detailed note on Data Analysis I: Coding.
- Write a detailed note on Data Analysis II: Trustworthiness.
- Write a detailed note on Writing the Qualitative Report.
- Write a detailed note on Ethics in Qualitative Research.
- Write a detailed note on Mixed Methods and Proposal Writing.

Long questions with model answer outlines

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Foundations of Qualitative Research. Answer outline: • Ontology: multiple constructed realities; epistemology: knowledge co-created by researcher and participants. • Used when: exploring new phenomena, understanding processes, giving voice to participants — e.g. why teachers resist a new curriculum. • When you need prevalence or causation at scale. • When the question is "how many" not "how". • Mixed methods can bridge the gap.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Qualitative Research Designs. Answer outline: • Narrative: collects stories, restories them chronologically. • Phenomenology: brackets researcher assumptions; seeks the essence of experience (interviews with 5-25 people). • Grounded theory: constant comparison; theoretical sampling until saturation; ends in a theory. • Ethnography: prolonged fieldwork, participant observation of a culture-sharing group. • Case study: bounded by time and place; multiple data sources converge.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Sampling and Research Questions. Answer outline: • Maximum variation: capture diverse perspectives. • Homogeneous: focus on a subgroup in depth. • Typical / extreme / critical case sampling. • Snowball: participants refer others (hidden populations). • Criterion sampling: all cases meeting a criterion.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Data Collection: Interviews. Answer outline: • Build rapport; start with easy descriptive questions. • Use probes: "Tell me more", "Give an example", "What was that like?" • Ask open questions; avoid leading, double-barrelled and jargon questions. • Record (with consent), take field notes on nonverbals, transcribe verbatim. • Very important for exams: pilot-test the interview guide before fieldwork.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Data Collection: Observation and Documents. Answer outline: • Complete participant: covert insider; complete observer: detached outsider. • Participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant: the common middle grounds. • Record: descriptive notes (what happened) separate from reflective notes (your reactions). • Challenges: observer effect (Hawthorne), selective attention, ethics of covert roles. • Public documents: policies, curricula, newspapers; private: diaries, lesson plans, student work.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Data Analysis I: Coding. Answer outline: • Open coding: break data into segments, label concepts ("teacher frustration with workload"). • Axial coding: relate categories — conditions, actions, consequences. • Selective coding: integrate around a core category into a storyline/theory. • In-vivo codes use participants' own words; a codebook keeps definitions consistent. • Familiarize -> generate initial codes -> search for themes -> review themes -> define and name -> write up.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Data Analysis II: Trustworthiness. Answer outline: • Triangulation: multiple sources, methods, investigators or theories converge. • Member checking: participants verify interpretations. • Negative case analysis: actively seek disconfirming evidence. • Reflexivity: researcher examines their own biases (memos, journals) — very important for exams: the researcher is the instrument, so bias management is explicit. • Not "she was angry" but the clenched fists, the silence.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Writing the Qualitative Report. Answer outline: • Structure: introduction, literature, methods (design, sampling, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, ethics), findings, discussion, conclusion. • Findings: themes as headings, rich participant quotes as evidence, pseudonyms protect identity. • Balance description and interpretation — show data, then tell what it means. • Reflexive statement: position yourself (a teacher studying teachers sees differently). • Visuals: models of the theory, matrices, participant profiles.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Ethics in Qualitative Research. Answer outline: • Informed consent: voluntary, comprehensible, ongoing — re-consent as focus shifts. • Confidentiality vs anonymity: protect identities (pseudonyms, disguised settings); anonymity means even the researcher cannot link data. • Do no harm: sensitive topics (abuse, failure) need care, referrals, right to withdraw. • Power relations: studying one's own students or subordinates needs extra safeguards. • Institutional review boards (IRB/ethics committees) approve proposals; gatekeepers grant site access.

Example

Q: Write a detailed note on Mixed Methods and Proposal Writing. Answer outline: • Convergent: qualitative + quantitative collected together, results merged. • Explanatory sequential: quantitative first, qualitative explains the numbers. • Exploratory sequential: qualitative first, builds the instrument or theory tested next. • Justify mixing: triangulation, complementarity, development, expansion. • Title, background and problem statement, research questions, significance.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Practice writing answers within the exam time limit.

MCQ Practice Test

Learning Objectives

- Test your recall of the key points from every chapter

Q1. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Foundations of Qualitative Research' in this handout?

- A. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- B. Case study is bounded; ethnography is cultural.
- C. Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases.
- D. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.

Q2. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Foundations of Qualitative Research' in this handout? 

- A. Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases.
- B. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- C. Case study is bounded; ethnography is cultural.
- D. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Q3. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Qualitative Research Designs' in this handout?

- A. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- B. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- C. Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases.
- D. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.

Q4. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Qualitative Research Designs' in this handout?

- A. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- B. Case study is bounded; ethnography is cultural.
- C. Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases.
- D. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.

Q5. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Sampling and Research Questions' in this handout?

- A. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- B. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- C. Purposeful, not random: information-rich cases.
- D. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.

Q6. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Sampling and Research Questions' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- C. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- D. Saturation, not sample size, decides when to stop.

Q7. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Collection: Interviews' in this handout? 

- A. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- B. Semi-structured interviews are the workhorse of qualitative research.
- C. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- D. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.

Q8. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Collection: Interviews' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. Probing turns answers into data.

Q9. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Collection: Observation and Documents' in this handout?

- A. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- B. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- C. Separate description from interpretation in field notes.
- D. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Q10. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Collection: Observation and Documents' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- C. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- D. Multiple sources enable triangulation.

Q11. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Analysis I: Coding' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. Coding = labelling meaning; themes = patterned answers to the research question.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Q12. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Analysis I: Coding' in this handout? 

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. Analysis is iterative, not linear.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Q13. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Analysis II: Trustworthiness' in this handout?

- A. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- B. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- C. Trustworthiness replaces validity/reliability vocabulary.
- D. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.

Q14. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Data Analysis II: Trustworthiness' in this handout?

- A. Thick description lets readers judge transferability.
- B. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Q15. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Writing the Qualitative Report' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- C. Quotes are evidence, not decoration — analyse each one.
- D. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.

Q16. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Writing the Qualitative Report' in this handout?

- A. Methods section must let others audit your trail.
- B. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.

Q17. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Ethics in Qualitative Research' in this handout? 

- A. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- B. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- C. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- D. Ethics is continuous, not a one-time signature.

Q18. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Ethics in Qualitative Research' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- C. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- D. Protecting participants outweighs rich data.

Q19. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Mixed Methods and Proposal Writing' in this handout?

- A. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- B. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. Mixed methods must justify why one method is insufficient.

Q20. Which of the following was listed as a key point of 'Mixed Methods and Proposal Writing' in this handout?

- A. Qualitative = meaning in natural settings; quantitative = measurement and testing.
- B. The paradigm table is the most examined comparison.
- C. Design follows the question: experience -> phenomenology; culture -> ethnography; process/theory -> grounded theory.
- D. A proposal sells rigour before data exists.

Answer Key

1. D 2. D 3. B 4. B 5. C 6. D 7. B 8. D 9. C 10. D 11. B 12. B 13. C 14. A 15. C 16. A 17. D 18. D 19. D 20. D

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Attempt all MCQs without looking back, then check the answer key.

Exam Strategy Guide

Learning Objectives

- Attempt papers with a winning strategy

Before the exam

- Revise the Key Points boxes and glossary first — they carry the highest marks per minute.
- Practice one past paper under timed conditions; examiners repeat question styles.
- Sleep well the night before — an exhausted brain recalls far less.

Attempting the paper

- Read the whole paper first; start with your strongest question to build momentum.
- Allocate time by marks: a 10-mark question deserves roughly double a 5-mark one.
- Structure long answers: definition, explanation, example/diagram, conclusion.

Presentation matters

- Use headings, underline key terms, and draw labelled diagrams where possible.
- Attempt all questions — partial credit beats a blank page.
- Review your paper in the last 10 minutes for missed parts.

Exam Pointer

Very important for exams: Very important for exams: neat, structured answers consistently score higher than longer messy ones.