Qualitative Research

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Course instructor

Name: **Prof. Dr. Frank-Martin Belz**
Room: TUM School of Management
Mail: Frank.Belz@tum.de

Location

Campus Munich

Application procedure

Goal and target audience

The seminar is designed for doctoral candidates at the TUM School of Management who intend to employ qualitative research in their dissertations. The ideal time to take this seminar is after the preliminary choice of topic but before entering the field (or alternatively: after initial data collection but before the second round of data collection).

Application/Registration process

Limited spots are available. Doctoral students from other schools and universities are also welcome. If the seats are booked out, priority will be given to doctoral candidates from the TUM School of Management. Application via Email to Prof. Dr. Frank-Martin Belz by 1 December 2026 (23:59 p.m.) with CV and a short motivation letter (max. 1 page), including a tentative topic for qualitative research.

Course aim

What this course is

Qualitative research has become an established method of inquiry in human and social sciences, including management and related fields. Qualitative papers are published in leading management journals (e.g. Academy of Management Journal). In this seminar, you will learn about: theoretical aims of qualitative research; ontological and epistemological assumptions; qualitative research designs; research methods for qualitative data collection and analysis, including the use of AI tools.

What this course is not

This course is not about quantitative research.

Course objectives

Knowledge Objectives

- Understand the ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research
- Gain knowledge of core qualitative research designs, methods of data collection and analysis, including the use of AI
- Recognize how qualitative research contributes to theory development (variance vs. process theory; building, elaboration, testing)

Skills Objectives

- Critically evaluate and compare qualitative research designs and published studies
- Apply appropriate tools and techniques for qualitative data collection and analysis
- Design a coherent qualitative research project that aligns questions, theory, and methodology

Learning Objectives

- Make informed decisions about why, when, and how to employ qualitative research
- Develop and justify a qualitative research design related to their dissertation
- Craft and present an initial qualitative research proposal and integrate feedback from peers and the instructor

Schedule

Date	Place	Contents
12.01.2027 (14:00-17:30)	TUM	Introduction to Qualitative Research – Theoretical Aims and Fundamental Assumptions
13.01.2027 (9:00-12:30)	TUM	Qualitative Research Designs – Case Study, Ethnography, Interview and Document Studies
13.01.2027 (14:00-17:30)	TUM	The Anatomy of a Qualitative Study – Unpacking Theory, Designs, and Methods
14.01.2027 (9:00-12:30)	TUM	Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis – Templates, Tools and Techniques
15.01.2027 (9:00-12:30)	TUM	Qualitative Research in the Age of AI – Prospects, Potentials and Pitfalls
22.02.2027 (9:00-17:30)	Online	Qualitative Research Project Proposals – Feedback and Discussions

The bloc seminar, scheduled from 12-15 January 2027, will be held in person at the Technical University of Munich (Rooms tbd). The final session, scheduled for 22 February 2027, will be held online.

Core readings

The following articles are **essential readings** for the doctoral seminar on qualitative research. They combine method articles with journal articles, which employ qualitative research in an exemplary fashion. The articles are listed in logical order of proposed reading (not alphabetical order). Altogether, they form a basis for our discussion. The doctoral candidates are expected to **read the articles before class** to enable individual assignments, group exercises, and plenum discussions. The required and further readings are available as PDF files on Moodle for participants' convenience.

Session 1: Introduction to Qualitative Research – Theoretical Aims and Fundamental Assumptions

Rouse, E., Reinecke, J., Ravasi, D., Langley, A., Grimes, M., & Gruber, M. 2025. Making a Theoretical Contribution with Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 68 (2): 257-266.

Sutton, R.I. & Staw, B.M. 1995. What Theory is *Not*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3): 371-384.

Weick, K.E. 1995. What Theory is *Not*, Theorizing *Is*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3): 385-390.

van de Ven, A. H. 2007. Variance and Process Models. In: van de Ven, A. H. (eds.): *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research,* Oxford University Press: Oxford: 143-160.

Giesler, M. & Thompson, C. J. (2016). Process Theorization in Cultural Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43 (4), 497–508.

Morgan, G., & Smircich, L. 1980. The Case for Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 5(4): 491-500.

Session 2: Qualitative Research Designs – Case Study, Ethnography, Interview and Document Studies

Eisenhardt, K. 1989. Building Theories from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*, *14*(4): 532-550.

Eisenhardt, K. 2021. What is the Eisenhardt Method, Really? *Strategic Organization*, 19(1) 147-160.

Reeves, S., Peller, J. & Kitto, S. (2013): Ethnography in qualitative educational research. *Medical Teacher*, 35: 1365-1379.

Session 3: The Anatomy of a Qualitative Study – Unpacking Theory, Designs, and Methods

Eisenhardt, K.M. 1989. Making Fast Strategic Decisions in High-Velocity Environments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(3): 543-576.

Fauchart, E. & Gruber, M. 2011. Darwinians, Communitarians, and Missionaries: The Role of Identity in Entrepreneurship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5): 935-957.

Martin, D. & Schouten, J. W. (2014). Consumption-Driven Market Emergence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (5), 855-70.

Munir, K.A. & Philips, N. 2005. The Birth of the 'Kodak Moment': Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Adoption of New Technologies. *Organization Studies*, 26(11): 1665-1687.

Session 4: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis – Templates, Tools and Techniques

Arsel, Z. (2017). Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44 (4): 939-948.

Gioia, D.A., Corley, K.G., & Hamilton, A.L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, *16*(1): 15-31.

Cloutier, C. & Ravasi, D. 2021. Using tables to enhance the trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Strategic Organization*, 19(1): 113-133.

Langley, A. 1999. Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 691-710.

Session 5: Qualitative Research in the Age of AI – Prospects, Potentials and Pitfalls

Nicmanis, M., & Spurrier, H. 2025. Getting Started with Artificial Intelligence Assisted Qualitative Analysis: An Introductory Guide to Qualitative Research Approaches with Exploratory Examples from Reflexive Content Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Research*, 24: 1-14.

Zhang, H., Wu, C., Xie, J, Lyu, Y., & Cai, J. 2025. Harnessing the power of AI in qualitative research: Exploring, using and redesigning ChatGPT. *Computers in Human Behaviour: Artificial Humans*, 4: 1-20.

Brailas, A. 2025. Artificial Intelligence in Qualitative Research: Beyond Outsourcing Data Analysis to the Machine. *Psychology International*, 7: 1-18.

Session 6: Qualitative Research Project Proposals – Feedback and Discussions

Research project proposals submitted by participants

Course procedures

The bloc seminar combines short lectures, interactive discussions, and hands-on exercises. The doctoral candidates are expected to prepare thoroughly beforehand, as class time is for discussion and application. Each session builds on preparatory readings and applies them to participants' own dissertation-related topics. The doctoral candidates are expected to:

- Complete all assigned readings before each session and bring annotated notes or questions to facilitate discussion.
- Actively participate in in-class activities, including peer feedback rounds and practical exercises (e.g., anatomy of qualitative studies).
- Apply seminar content directly to their tentative topic for qualitative research.

Learning Environment & Expectations

The seminar is designed as a collaborative and constructive learning space where all participants contribute to the shared knowledge-building. To maintain a high-quality and respectful academic environment, the doctoral candidates are expected to follow our codes of conduct, and:

- Engage respectfully with peers' work and provide constructive, evidence-based feedback.
- Observe plagiarism at all times, including correct citation and avoidance of plagiarism.
- Use AI tools responsibly, ensuring transparency about their role in the research process, and critically reviewing any AI-generated content before inclusion into the assignment.
- Clearly indicate in the proposal where and how AI tools were (or were not) used.
- Protect the confidentiality of peer research topics and data shared during the seminar.
- Be prepared to present and discuss progress on assignments in plenary and small-group discussions.

The instructor commits to fostering an open, constructive and supportive atmosphere and offering timely feedback.

Assignment

The main assignment is a qualitative research project proposal, including the tentative topic, the main research question(s), research context, research design, research methods for qualitative data collection and analysis, including AI tools (ca. 2,000 words). The qualitative research project proposal must be uploaded as a PDF to Moodle by 15 February 2027 (23:59 p.m.). In the final session, the doctoral candidates will get in-depth feedback from their fellow students and the instructor, with a special emphasis on methodological aspects. The assignment provides doctoral candidates with hands-on experience in qualitative research design and methods while directly advancing their dissertation work.

Assessment

The seminar is graded on a **pass/fail** basis. To successfully pass the seminar, the participants must:

- Attend and actively participate in all seminar sessions. Absences require prior notification and must be compensated for through agreed-upon work.
- Complete all required readings prior to the relevant sessions, and be prepared to summarize the key points and contribute to discussions and exercises.
- Participate in collaborative activities, including peer feedback and group exercises, in a respectful and professional manner.
- Submit the final assignment by the stated deadline.
- Demonstrate satisfactory quality in the final assignment (e.g., a brief but focused overview of relevant literature top position the tentative topics, clarity of research question, coherence between design and method, and feasibility). Unsatisfactory work in the final assignment can be revised once after feedback.

Workload

3 ECTS = 90 hours

Use of AI

This syllabus, including the structure and the careful selection of readings, was prepared by the instructor. ChatGPT 5.0 was employed to refine the text. Any AI-generated input was critically reviewed, revised and approved by the instructor.