



Wageningen School
of Social Sciences

Research Methodology: From topic to proposal

March 23, April 6, 20 and May 4 and 18, 2017

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PhD Course
Wageningen School of Social Sciences

“The project proposal appeared so clear but now I do not know where to start.”

“I do not know what my research could add to clarify this issue. It is so obvious what the outcome is going to be.”

“Really, everything in my project is so important and interesting. I guess I need some help to learn how to focus.”

Do you recognize any of the above concerns? Then this course is for you! Also, when you have little idea about what aspects of methodology could be important to your project, then this course is of interest for you too!

Aim of this course:

The aim of this course is to offer insight into the process of (getting started with) research and the methodological pitfalls you may encounter between formulating a research problem and writing a scientific paper. This course addresses research design and methodological issues for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods strategies.

By the end of this course you will have

- formulated research questions and decided on the appropriateness of hypotheses
- made an informed choice between a number of study designs
- reviewed pros and cons of several data collection methods
- decided on a sampling strategy suitable for your research

In this course we go through the steps from turning a socially relevant interest into a scientifically sound research problem, writing a research proposal and composing a research report. Assignments require you to work on your own project. By the end of this course you will have developed a (skeleton) research or a paper proposal, depending on your entrance level and the complexity of the PhD proposal.

Topics in the course are:

- Research as a way of thinking
- Research as a process
- Formulating research questions
- From concept to variable
- Choosing a research design
- Types of data collection instruments
- Sampling
- Ethical issues in data collection

Literature:

Ranjit Kumar (2014). Research methodology(4th ed). London, Thousands Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications Ltd. ISBN 9781446269978.

Location: Wageningen University, De Leeuwenborch building, Hollandseweg 1.

Schedule

- **Thursday March 23, 9.00-12.15, room C75 Leeuwenborch, Hollandseweg 1**
Meeting 1. From topic to research question: An introduction to the course and the other participants; formulating a research question; from topic to research question; concepts and variables; constructing hypotheses. Please bring with you to class, the title of your project and a short summary of no more than 500 words. Read Chapter 3-4 before you submit the first assignment. Assignment 1 contains your summary of problem definition, research objectives and research questions (max. 2 pages, in Arial 10 or larger with line spacing of 1.5). Assignment 1 is due October 19th. Please read chapters 5,6 and 13 before the next meeting.
- **Thursday April 6, 9.00-12.15 , room C4015 Orion, Bronland 1**
Meeting 2. Study designs: Designs based on the number of contacts, designs based on the reference period, other commonly used study designs. Please read chapter 7- 8, and finish the exercises before the next meeting.
- **Thursday April 20, 9.00-12.15 , room C67 Leeuwenborch, Hollandseweg 1**
Meeting 3. Data collection methods: Primary and secondary sources, observations, interviews, questionnaires, validity and reliability of research instruments, ethical issues in data collection. Please read chapter 9-11 and 14 and finish the exercises before the next meeting.
- **Thursday May 4, 9.00-12.15, room C76 Leeuwenborch, Hollandseweg 1**
Meeting 4. Sampling: Principles of sampling, random and non-random sampling strategies, case selection. Please read chapter 12 and 17, and reread 13 before the next meeting. In addition you will be asked to volunteer your research proposal (max 5 pages, in Arial 10 or larger with line spacing of 1.5) and be requested to review two or three research proposals before the next meeting.
- **Thursday May 18, 9.00-12.15 , room C70 Leeuwenborch, Hollandseweg 1**
Meeting 5. Final meeting: Simulation of research assessment meeting in which two or three research proposals are discussed. The meeting will close with other issues raised by course participants, and further details on the final assignment (your proposal).

The first four meetings consist of lectures and exercises that should be treated as small assignments although only one is to be handed in. After the fourth meeting, you will finish the assignment and hand in a (skeleton) research proposal or paper proposal. Two (or three) of the research proposals will be discussed extensively in the fifth meeting when we simulate a research assessment committee meeting. Based on this meeting and the feedback of the lecturer you can improve your proposal. The deadline for submission of the final assignment (your proposal) is December 14, 2015. NB: To benefit from the course, active participation during the meetings as well as thorough preparation for each meeting is required. Participants are asked to be present on time in all of the five meetings. Presence in at least four full meetings is a requirement for passing the course!

Credits and Examination:

This is a 4-ECTS credit (112 hours) course, which will be completed after the final course assignment has been reviewed and approved as sufficient.

Prerequisites:

Sufficient knowledge of English:

Participants who are obliged to pass a TOEFL or IELTS test as a prerequisite for entering the WU PhD-programme are requested to provide us with the positive results of the TOEFL or IELTS test.

- IELTS: 6.5, with a minimum of 6.0 for each (academic) module.
- TOEFL: 580 points for the written TOEFL, 237 points for the computer based TOEFL and 92-93 points for the internet based TOEFL. All are to be supplemented by results of the Test of Written English (academic TWE). The minimum score required for this test is 5.0

Course fee:

The course fee for PhD students of **WASS** with an approved TSP is €250. Others pay €600. The course fee includes coffee/tea, lunches and the book (Kumar 2014).

Registration Procedure:

Register via the website: <http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Graduate-Schools/Wageningen-School-of-Social-Sciences/Courses/Registration.htm>

Please make sure you provide the most recent contact details so that in case of any changes you will be notified promptly.

After your internet registration you will receive a short notification that your name has been registered.

At least 2 weeks before the course you will receive a confirmation about the location and the schedule. MG3S will also send a bill to your address indicated on the registration form.

Please send an e-mail to Marcella.haan@wur.nl in case you have not received the second confirmation two weeks before the course.

Cancellations:

The participants can cancel their registration without any fee 1 month before the course starts. A cancellation fee of 100% applies if a participant cancels his/her registration in the course less than 1 month prior to the start of the course.

The organisers have the right to cancel the course no later than one month before the planned course start date in the case that the number of registrations does not reach the minimum.

The participants will be notified of any changes at their e-mail addresses.

Further Information

For details about logistics, registration, fees, study materials, etc. please contact

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