

**Government of the Russian Federation**

**Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution  
for Higher Professional Education  
«National Research University  
«Higher School of Economics»**

**Discipline program**

Methodology and methods of sociology (qualitative methods)

For course 040100.62 «Sociology», preparation for a Bachelor's degree.

Program developed by:

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Recommended by the Board of Education for Sociology \_\_\_\_\_20

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ V.G.Ledyaev

Approved by the Academic Board of the Department of Sociology \_\_\_\_\_20

Academic Secretary E.V. Nadezhkina \_\_\_\_\_

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*This program may not be used by other departments within the University or other institutions of higher education without permission of the Department-developer of this program.*

**1. Areas of use and reference codes.**

This educational discipline program establishes the minimal standards for attained student knowledge and skills, and determines the content and types of academic studies and reporting.

The program is intended for professors teaching this particular discipline, teaching assistants, and students in 040100.62 Sociology, that are studying the “Methodology and methods of sociological research” discipline.

The program was developed in accordance with:

- The educational standards set forth by Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution for Higher Professional Education, National Research University-Higher School of Economics, for 040100.62 Sociology,
- Educational program 040100.62 Sociology,
- The University's working academic plan for the 040100.62 Sociology, approved in 2012.

## 2. Goals for studying the discipline.

This course is dedicated to qualitative methods in sociology within the general context of sociological research methods. This course is the second part of the “Methodology and methods of sociological research” academic discipline (the first part of the discipline is dedicated to qualitative methods). The course has an introductory portion that introduces students to theoretical basics and types of qualitative research. The main portion of the course consists of a detailed review of the logic and sequence of actions during the stages of qualitative research from the initial premise of research to data analysis and interpretation. The use of different strategies and methods is demonstrated through examples of specific research. This course involves the development of skills and experience in working with qualitative methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials in practice sessions.

The goal of studying the “Methodologies and methods of sociological research” discipline is to instill a basic understanding of qualitative methods, to show the gist and variety of research opportunities of qualitative research strategy, and to work on practical skills of planning and conducting qualitative field research.

## 3. Scope of student knowledge that will be acquired as a result of mastering the discipline.

As a result of studying the discipline, the student must:

- Know the principles of qualitative sociological research methodology as well as specific strategies and methods of qualitative data collection and analysis,
- Be able to choose and use methods of qualitative research, interpret the obtained results, plan and organize the collection of social information, and analyze text materials with modern programs,
- Have the skills to prepare and conduct qualitative sociological research, from establishing the problem to analyzing the materials and presenting the results; gain the experience of conducting empirical research using interview and involved observation methods.

As a result of learning the discipline, the student acquires the following expert skills:

Expert skill	Code in FSES/ SRU	Descriptions – main signifiers of acquired knowledge (markers of reaching results)	Forms and methods of teaching that aid in formation and development of skills
Ability to perceive, generalize and analyze data, set goals and choose ways of reaching them ( <i>partial development</i> )	OK-1	-Recognizes social problems, has the skill of separating the research problem, can argue the	Lectures, preparation and discussion of reports on specific research, seminar discussion. Planning of

		choice of research goals -Can use methods of sociological research reasonably in relation to tasks and goals of research	training research with seminar discussion.
Ability to express oral and written thought logically, clearly and in a well-articulated manner ( <i>partial development</i> )	OK-2	-has mastered professional terminology -demonstrates the oral report skill in course topics -has mastered the skill of academic written communication -demonstrates readiness to lead discussion on professional topics	Seminar presentations, preparing essay text and presentation at seminar.
Readiness to cooperate with colleagues, work in groups ( <i>partial development</i> )	OK-3	-has mastered the skills of organizing effective cooperation with colleagues -has mastered the skills of communication with the use of professional terminology	Working in small groups at practice sessions (involved observation, focus groups). Conducting training research, preparation and presentation of results at seminars
Ability to use the main points and methods of humanities and socio-economics sciences when solving professional tasks ( <i>partial development</i> )	OK-9	-demonstrates understanding in the field of use of strong and weak sides of various methods of collecting sociological information -justifies the choice of research methodology and its reasons in relation to set tasks	Lectures, test, preparation for seminars (independent work) – reading literature from recommended list with subsequent analysis at seminars, analysis of cases at seminar
Ability to use basic and professional knowledge and skills on the fundamentals of sociology theory and methods of sociological research in professional work ( <i>partial development</i> )	PK-1	- knows main theoretical models and methods of research, that describe social action, social perception, communication and cooperation at the micro-level -knows main principles of qualitative research methodology -sees the connections between sociological theory, methods, and	Lectures, test, homework assignments, conducting training research

		<p>research goals</p> <p>-can justify the choice of methods, has mastered the skills of assessing the relevance of methodological instruments</p>	
<p>Ability to independently formulate goals, set specific tasks for academic research in various areas of sociology (<i>partial development</i>)</p>	PK-2	<p>-has mastered the skill of reporting on professional literature (including foreign language literature)</p> <p>-uses the skills of formulating the goal of academic research based on analysis of professional literature, research descriptions</p> <p>-has the skills of designing qualitative sociological research</p> <p>-has mastered the skills of analyzing sociological data using application programs packages</p>	<p>Conducting training research and discussing its' stages at seminars.</p> <p>Practice sessions on analysis of qualitative data by using application programs packages</p>
<p>Ability and readiness to participate in compilation and formatting of academic/technical documentation, scientific reports, demonstrate the results of research work taking into account the particularities of potential audience (<i>partial development</i>)</p>	PK-3	<p>-uses the skills of correct formatting of scientific reports</p> <p>-demonstrates the skills of using informational technologies for presenting research results</p> <p>-knows how to demonstrate results of research and analytical work</p>	<p>Lectures, written homework assignments, presentation of the practice project results</p>
<p>Ability to use sociological research methods to study important social problems, for identifying the needs and interests of social groups (<i>partial development</i>)</p>	PK-5	<p>-demonstrates the skills of choosing a sociological method of research, depending on the particularities of the goal group</p> <p>-justifies the use of chosen research methodology in relation to specific set goal</p>	<p>Written homework assignments, conducting and presenting the results of practice research</p>

#### 4. The discipline's place within the overall educational program structure.

This discipline is part of the professional disciplines cycle (basic component). Studying this discipline is based on the following discipline prerequisites:

- Sociological theory
- Logic
- Methodology and methods of sociological research (part 1)
- Application software

The main points/theses of this discipline must be subsequently used in studying the following disciplines:

- Term thesis
- Academic research seminar
- Selective courses

## 5. Topic plan for academic discipline.

№	Name of section/topic	Total Hours	Lecture Hours	Seminar Hours	Self-Study Hours
1	The place of qualitative methods in the system of social knowledge	26	2	4	20
2	Main strategies of qualitative research	20	4	6	10
3	Designing a qualitative research project	18	2	6	10
4	Procedures and methods of field work. Interviews in qualitative research	31	4	12	15
5	Procedures and methods of field work. Inclusive observation.	36	4	12	20
6	Methods and procedures of analysis of qualitative data. Preparation of a report and presenting the results	36	4	12	20
TOTAL		162	20	52	90

## 6. Forms of control of student scholastic attainment

Type of control	Form of control	Modules			
		1	2	3	4 Parameters
In-progress	Test	X			Written (30 minutes)
	Homework assignments	X	X		2 homework assignments are planned: "Transcript interview," "Protocol of observation" (1500-2000 words each)
	Essay		X		3000-4000 words
Interim			X		Based on test, homework assignments 1 and 2, report.
Final	Final exam		X		Written exam (60 minutes)

## 7. Discipline contents

## **Topic 1. Introduction to qualitative methods. The place of qualitative methods in the system of social knowledge.**

Qualitative tradition in sociology, approaches to studying social phenomena through the prism of “society in individuals.” Theoretical and methodological bases of qualitative sociology: M. Veber's “understanding sociology,” symbolical interactionism (J. Mead, G. Bloomer), A. Schutz' “sociology of the everyday,” G. Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, social construction of reality (P. Berger and T. Lookman).

The appearance and historical development of qualitative methods in empirical social research: the British anthropology school (B. Malinovsky, A. Radcliffe-Brown, M. Mead), “classic” case study (Chicago school). Main stages of qualitative sociology development (N. Denzin's, I. Lincoln's periodization). Methodological discussion and research practices. Qualitative research in Russia (overview).

Qualitative approach as “the other” methodology of empirical research. The correlation of the terms “qualitative sociology” and “qualitative methods.” Basic criticisms of qualitative methods. The problem of subjectivity and objectivity in sociological knowledge.

## **Topic 2. Main strategies of qualitative research**

Main principles and informational possibilities of qualitative methods. Qualitative methods areas of use.

Comparative characteristics of major strategies of qualitative empirical research (approaches to typology).

Case study. The notion of “case.” R. Yin's concept case study. Typology of case study based on goals: reconnaissance, descriptive, explanatory. Singular and comparative case study. Monographic research.

Ethnographic research. Ethnographic approaches in modern marketing research (home visit, day with consumer, hidden observation).

Life story (biographical method), oral history.

B. Glazer's, A. Strauss' Grounded theory as research strategy.

## **Topic 3. Designing a qualitative research project**

Specifics of designing a qualitative research project. Functions and structure of programs in qualitative research. Research questions and hypotheses. The role of theory. Structuring the object.

The problem of representation and the notion of theoretical selection. Justification and methods of selecting research objects (cases). The design of singular and comparative research.

General logic of conducting qualitative research. The multimethodology principle. Possibilities of combining qualitative and quantitative methods (phase model, parallel and sequential use of methods).

## **Topic 4. Procedures and methods of field work. Interviews in qualitative research**

Types of observation. The roles of researcher (hidden, open, inclusive and exclusive observation). The notion of the observation matrix. Inclusive observation as research strategy. “Street corner society” (W. White)

The “entering” and “exiting” the field problem. Information sources. Key informants.

Instruments for providing dependable results (the notion of triangulation), types of triangulation.

Types of field documents. Requirements of note-taking. The notion of “theoretical sensitivity” and “sociological imagination.”

Stages of field work.

Ethics of the researcher's behavior.

### **Topic 5. Procedures and methods of field work. Inclusive observation.**

Types of interviews. Interview guides: types of guides; structure of guides.

Specifics of a polyformalized interview.

Leitmotif interview

Types of focused interviews. The use of group discussions in sociological and marketing research.

F. Schutze's methodology of narrative interviews.

Dialogue interview as action research instrument.

General rules of preparation for and conducting of interviews. Methods of establishing psychological contact. Rules of transcription.

### **Topic 6. Methods and procedures of analysis of qualitative data.**

Types and specifics of qualitative data. The logic of qualitative data analysis: analytics induction (W. Thomas), building ideal types, illustrative method. General principles of analytical description. Analytically thick description (C. Geertz)

Grounded Theory. Encoding procedures: open, axial, and selective encoding.

Analytical generalization in the even of only a few available cases. Presentation of qualitative research results, as a separate genre of sociological written work.

### **Topic 8. Educational technologies.**

These course sessions are in the form of interactive lectures, group discussions, and practice sessions for working on the use of qualitative methods in field work skills.

The following formats are used in seminars and practice sessions:

- project work in groups (development and carrying-out of independent empirical research by a group of students)
- discussions (discussions of the major stages of empirical research – creation of the program, developing the instruments, choosing the analytical approach, etc)
- reports (student reports on the course's topics – examples of research done in qualitative strategies, approaches to qualitative data analysis).

## **9. Criteria for grading of in-progress control and student assessment**

### **9.1 Topics of in-progress control assignments.**

#### **List of questions in preparation for the test on theoretical sources:**

1. Explain the main idea behind “individual” and “typical” objects, according to A. Schutz. Give examples.
2. Describe the notion of “intersubjective world” according to A. Schutz.
3. What does Schutz call “the system of relevancy?” Give a detailed description of this term.
4. According to Schutz' ideas, what is the difference in action motives of “in order to” and “because of?” How do these differences influence the method of inclusive observation?
5. What does Schutz consider “subjective interpretation?” How is this notion related to the method of inclusive observation?

6. What is P. Berger's and T. Luckmann's main idea regarding every day world "construction?" Who constructs it?
7. According to P. Berger and T. Luckmann, what is the "phenomenological analysis of the everyday?"
8. According to P. Berger and T. Luckmann, what is the "reality of everyday life" concept?
9. As it related to the concepts of P. Berger and T. Luckmann, explain the phrase "here and now."
10. According to the theories of P. Berger and T. Luckmann, how can the everyday conclusion that "my colleagues have all gone mad" be interpreted?
11. What do you see as C. Geertz' main scientific thesis? Describe it. How does it relate to qualitative methods in sociology?
12. Describe the gist of the example of "winking" and "blinking" that C. Geertz gives (referencing Ryle). Based on this example, what is the main point and the object of research?
13. Describe the main point of ethnographic (thick) description, according to C. Geertz. Point out it's particularities.
14. How and for what does C. Geertz criticize the "Jonesville as USA" and "Easter Island as a laboratory" research? How does he determine the research subject based on criticisms of these works?
15. Describe how C. Geertz understands "interpretation?" What is its role in research?
16. What types of qualitative research do A. Strauss and J. Corbin emphasize? How are they different? Give examples.
17. How do A. Strauss and J. Corbin define "grounded theory?"
18. According to A. Strauss and J. Corbin, how are science and creativity balanced in grounded theory?
19. How do A. Strauss and J. Corbin interpret the "research question?" Give examples of research questions.
20. What is "theoretical sensitivity" and what are its sources? (according to A. Strauss' and J. Corbin's grounded theory)?

**Homework assignments** allow the students to demonstrate their skills in working with two main methods of collecting qualitative data (interview and observation). The students submit two documents on the topic of collective research, in Word format:

- interview transcript – word-for-word transcription of a conversation with an informant, formatted in accordance with professional rules (about 2000 words)
- observation protocol – detailed description of the object of observation, made according to a previously developed plan (protocol) (about 1000 words).

**Essay preparation** is aimed at making the students take a creative approach to solving specific problems and consciously use various methods of qualitative research. The essay is a written work based on the results of independently conducted qualitative research (by each student individually



or in groups of 2-3 people). The essay topic is chosen by the student for the list of suggested topics or independently (with approval from the instructor). The essay text has to include the description of the project (formulation of key questions, initial hypotheses, substantiation for case selection), and research results.

**Suggested topics for collective works (essays):**

- everyday practices (gifts, work, studying, relaxation, etc)
- public space (shops, squares, markets, etc)
- communities (students, subcultures, scientists, etc)

**9.2 Questions for evaluating the level of academic attainment of the discipline (approximate list)**

1. Which theoretical traditions can be said to be a part of interpretive sociology?
2. What are the main stages of qualitative method development in sociology? Name key works conducted in the qualitative tradition.
3. To what extent is it possible to use qualitative and quantitative methods in one research project? Describe possibilities. Give examples.
4. For what class of sociological problems can one reasonably use qualitative methods? Explain your position. Provide examples.
5. What is the multimethodology principle in relation to qualitative research? With what strategies can it be used?
6. Is it possible to base a theory on one case? How is this possibility methodologically explained in Glazer's and Strauss's grounded theory?
7. What is the holistic approach in qualitative research?
8. What are the particularities of case studies? What types of case studies do you know? How do they differ?
9. What is monographic research? What are its main traits?
10. What are the specifics of the biographical method as research strategy? Name the main types of biographical research.
11. What are the distinctive traits of ethnographic research? Which types of sociological problems can ethnographic research be used?
12. What are the particularities of the design qualitative research projects? Describe the main elements of the program.
13. What is theoretical selection? How are generalization problems dealt with in qualitative research?
14. Characterize the main methods of case selection in qualitative research.
15. How do you understand the research approach flexibility principle in relation to procedures of qualitative research?
16. Inclusive observation as research strategy. Describe the main procedures of inclusive observation.
17. The researcher's position when conducting inclusive observation. What are the advantages and disadvantages of various positions?
18. Problems with entering the field with inclusive observation. Key informants.
19. Which ethnographic methods are used in modern marketing research? Give examples.
20. Describe the main types of interviews in qualitative research. For which sociological tasks are various types of interviews used?
21. Procedures for preparing for and conducting interviews in qualitative research. Rules of transcription.
22. What is F. Schutze's narrative interview methodology?
23. Major types of focused interviews. What are the areas of use of focused interviews in sociology and marketing?

24. Advantages and limitations of using the focus group method. Describe the major procedures of preparing for and conducting focus groups.
25. What does the term triangulation mean in qualitative research? What main types of triangulation do you know?
26. Analytically thick description according to C. Geertz.
27. Describe the encoding procedures when analyzing texts: open, axial and selective encoding.
28. What are the particularities of qualitative data? Which approaches to analyzing qualitative data can you name?

## **10. Overall grading for the discipline**

In-progress control is composed of student grades for work at the seminars and practice sessions, grades for homework assignments, grades for the essay.

All grades are on a 10-point scale and rounded to the nearest whole number. The 10-point scale is translated into the 5-point scale as follows:

- “excellent”: 8-10
- “good”: 6-7
- “satisfactory”: 4-5
- “unsatisfactory”: 3 or less

Activity at seminars and practice sessions is assessed by the following criteria: competent presentations or participation in discussions, that demonstrates familiarity with recommended texts and thoughtful attainment of their contents.

Homework assignments consist of performing specific tasks on the practical attainment of planning methods and conducting field research, and is assessed by the following criteria: the level of reaching set goals, detailed/full data, correct format.

Criteria for grading the essay: the level of reaching research goals, correct formulations and format, detailed/full acquired data, skillful use of collection methods and qualitative data analysis, level of reason in interpreting acquired data.

The cumulative grade is weighted based upon the following criteria:

- 10% - test (theory)
- 20% - attendance (lectures and seminars)
- 30% - essay (final, collective work)
- 20% - participation at seminars
- 20% - homework assignments (interview transcript and observation protocol)

A written final exam will be given in cases where the student has not submitted all in-progress assignments (the test, two homework assignments, and the essay), or the cumulative grade for them is less than 4 points. The final grade is based upon the following weights: 60% for the cumulative grade and 40% for final exam.

The grade for the final written exam is based on the fullness and level of detail in the answer, as well as the student's ability to give his own examples, describe and argue his own point of view, and express critical opinions on the subject.

## **11.1 Program software**

For the “qualitative data analysis” topic, the students will use the following programs:  
-ATLAS.TI

-NVIVO

### **11.2 Distance-learning support for the discipline**

LMS at SRI HSE, 00268 “Qualitative methods in sociology”

The course has short texts on select lectures, presentations, educational videos, films, illustrations, publications on topics relevant to the course.

### **12. Technical support of the discipline**

The lectures will use a projector to present.

Seminars on the topic of qualitative data analysis will be held in a computer lab.