Institute for Social Science Research Training

Methods for Social Analysis and Statistics (MFSAS)
Train with the experts in bridging the gap between data and social policy

As one of Australia’s largest social science institutions, researchers at The University of Queensland’s Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) address some of the most important issues and challenges facing the country today. ISSR’s work is broad, multi-disciplinary, and informed by the latest developments in social science theory and methods.

We deliver commercial services and expert training courses to public and private sector organisations, bridging the gap between those who work with statistics and social data, and those who need to apply them as part of creating effective policies.

The MFSAS Program

The Methods for Social Analysis and Statistics (MFSAS) program is designed for those who need to use, understand, and interpret social research data, but who may not necessarily have a background or training in qualitative data analysis, and/or research methods. Our workshops are ideal for professionals in government departments, agencies, non-government organisations, university staff and postgraduate students who want to learn more about methods for social analysis and translate scientific social research into public policy outcomes.

MFSAS courses provide participants with practical skills and content-relevant knowledge that they can immediately apply in their work, such as:

• How to construct, collate and interpret questions of social significance
• How to use social data to inform evidence-based policies and programs
• How to recognise the quality and robustness of research sources
Courses

Gathering and Analysing Qualitative Data Course

The 3-day Gathering and Analysing Qualitative Data course provides qualitative skills to design, collect, analyse and make evidence-informed decisions based on qualitative data or qualitative data integrated with quantitative data (mixed methods).

The trainers use their extensive experience to provide real world examples of how to apply this method in practice to collect large scale qualitative data and how to understand the results from administrative or survey data by investigating these findings in more depth through qualitative methods.

Using experiential design, the course provides opportunities to practice the skills learnt to undertake interviews, focus groups or visual methods whilst gaining feedback from the ISSR trainers.

Who this course is for

Research and policy officers in government or private sector; researchers; school leaders who gather evidence from their stakeholders; students enrolled for Higher Degree Research and anyone who gathers data through interviews, focus groups, documents, observation, or visual elicitation methods. Researchers developing a survey would find the course useful in the design and testing phase as well as to analyse data from open-ended questions.

Topics covered

• Designing research using the appropriate qualitative method(s)
• How qualitative and quantitative methods can complement and enhance our understanding of a research problem
• Understanding and addressing research bias
• Enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research through best practices measures such as keeping a reflective journal, creating a well-developed coding framework and engaging others in your analysis
• Developing qualitative research questions
• Planning research (including budget, ethics, sampling, participant recruitment and logistical arrangements)
• Developing qualitative instruments (including interview guides, consent forms and participant information sheets)
• Interviewing with confidence (including interview and facilitation skills, interview and focus group practice and feedback opportunities)
• Understanding other qualitative methods such as observation, ethnography, cognitive/retrospective interviews, visual elicitation methods and online methods
• Choosing the appropriate analytical approach for your study (including Grounded Theory Analysis, Thematic and Content Analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Narrative Analysis)
• Understanding the analytical process (including anonymising, step-by-step guidance through a worked example of coding, practical tips to develop a coding framework and code in ‘real world’ circumstances and developing themes from the codes)
• Using computer-assisted software in qualitative analysis process (including documentation, file storage processes, transcription and analysis and an introduction to NVivo and Leximancer)
• Interpreting qualitative data (including how to interpret qualitative results from peer reviewed papers)
• Writing up results for different audiences (including PhD thesis, peer-reviewed papers, reports, book chapters, participant summaries, policy briefs, podcasts, case studies and vignettes)
• Visualisation and presentation of qualitative data to maximise impact

Learning objectives

• Understand the impact of bias in all aspects of the research process
• Understand the value and purpose of qualitative research and when to use these methods
• Gain knowledge and skills to understand, design and conduct high quality qualitative research to inform evidence-based decisions
• Gain knowledge and skills to analyse and synthesise qualitative data
• Understand the complementarity between qualitative and quantitative methods and, where appropriate, integrate qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods research
• Critically review the quality of qualitative findings in reports, policy briefs and published papers
• Gain knowledge and skills to interpret, write-up and present qualitative findings for a range of audiences

Some really useful best-practice advice to better construct interview/survey questions and make sure that they are optimised for participants and will help to achieve the research question/outcomes. Also really great to test my analysis skills and see how the experts do it!

Simon Alperstein, National Acoustic Laboratories.
Program Evaluation course

This 2-day Introduction to Program Evaluation course introduces key evaluation concepts and techniques. It provides participants with the foundational skills to plan or commission an evaluation.

This course provides foundational knowledge and uses relevant scenarios and focused interactive activities to build practical skills and understanding.

Who this course is for
People who plan or implement social, health and human service interventions, and who need to monitor and assess their effectiveness or success, and people wanting to refresh their evaluation science knowledge.

Topics covered
- Key evaluation concepts and types
- Rationale and principles of evaluation, including application and timing
- Articulating evaluation questions
- Developing the Program Logic and Theory of Change
- Indicator selection, general data sources and data collection techniques
- Analysing, interpreting and effectively communicating evaluation findings
- Basic building blocks of evaluation plans and frameworks

Learning objectives
- Understand which types of evaluation are possible, and determine when each should be applied
- Determine evaluation activities appropriate for programs across implementation stages and scales
- Identify external and ethical issues that may impact the evaluation process
- Document a Program Logic and articulate a Theory of Change
- Articulate clear evaluation questions, and identify appropriate indicators to address them
- Understand the value of quantitative and qualitative data
- Determine appropriate analytical approaches
- Identify appropriate modes for sharing evaluation results with different stakeholders for maximum impact

“The content was easy to understand, practical and can complement the work I do. A very impressive course for anyone involved in program development and delivery.

Vicki Ogilvie, Department of Education.
This 3-day Social Cost-Benefit Analysis course is designed for professionals who need to engage with CBAs to aid the design and evaluation of public programs and policies and need hands-on skills to conduct CBAs.

This course equips participants with an understanding and working knowledge of the skills required to apply Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) to the appraisal and evaluation of projects, policies, programs and regulations with mainly social costs and benefits. The workshop will cover the potential uses and limitations of cost-benefit analysis (CBA), introduce Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, examine the principles and methods underlying CBA and non-market valuation, and provide hands-on exercises to practice the basic skills required to perform CBAs using Excel.

This course does NOT focus on non-economic project evaluation, but rather on the application of financial and economic principles, and analysis to the evaluation of projects, policies etc. with a social focus.

Who this course is for
Social policy, practice and research professionals, including those from government, NGO and research organisations, who want to develop their understanding and working knowledge of CBA techniques and its application in the decision-making process, including its role in Regulatory Impact Statements. It assumes little or no prior knowledge of economics or CBA.

Prerequisites: Basic Microsoft Excel proficiency is advisable.

Topics covered
• What is CBA? The role in public sector decision-making
• Economic principles and criteria underlying CBA as distinct from financial analysis
• Introducing concepts of discounting, Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) analysis, Net Present Value (NPV), Benefit/ Cost Ratio (BCR) and Internal Rate of Return (IRR)
• Social Return on Investment (SROI) as a variant of CBA for projects with intangible costs and benefits
• Using Sensitivity Analysis to allow for uncertainty
• Step-by-step demonstration of CBA applied to a social project for project appraisal

• Applying decision rules in CBA using Excel
• Identifying and valuing costs and benefits in CBA
• Methods and techniques of non-market valuation and data sources for including intangibles in CBA
• Assessment of SROI Analysis and an overview of the Queensland Government’s framework for Social Impact Analysis (SIA)
• A case study using CBA

Learning objectives
• Understand the rationale for CBAs, key concepts and economics principles underlying them, and how they can assist the policy and project decision-making process
• Learn basic processes and methods for undertaking CBA
• Discuss the need for the valuation and incorporation of non-monetary costs and benefits, including those of a social and/or intangible nature
• Appreciate SROI as a method to appraise projects with mainly intangible costs and benefits, and Social Impact Analysis (SIA) as prescribed by Queensland Government
• Understand the limitations of CBAs, including appropriate uses and caveats in interpretation of results
• Have practical experience using basic CBA processes and methods
• Demonstrate a basic proficiency in the use of spreadsheet-based CBAs
• Understand how to apply Sensitivity Analysis and Threshold Analysis techniques using Excel

The course gave me a sufficient knowledge of Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) to assess CBA produced by others. It also gave me knowledge to undertake CBA on existing data, and understanding of requirements of in-depth CBA. This course will benefit me in undertaking my current employment and also future work. Policy analysts and advisers should attend this course.

Ian Jeffreys, RACQ.
This 5-day intensive Longitudinal Data Analysis course has been specifically designed to deepen the specialist knowledge of your research teams and enhance the quality and meaning of the data you use when making crucial business decisions.

The course delves deeply into topics that are pivotal for organisations that use longitudinal data for research and decision-making. Using an engaging combination of presentations, exercise-based and group activities the course covers the latest in statistical methods, as well as how and where to apply them. The practical hands-on sessions use real-world longitudinal data, from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) longitudinal survey, and Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC).

This course is only open to group bookings of 10 or more participants. It can be tailored for in person or online delivery (with organisational licences for stata). Email us to discuss.

Who this course is for
Analysts and researchers in government, private organisations and universities who want to develop their skills in the analysis and interpretation of longitudinal data.

Prerequisites
- Working knowledge of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques.
- Stata® software experience is desirable but not necessary.

The course introduced me to an additional suite of analytical tools, which adds to my range of analytical options and will provide me with additional “leads when looking for patterns in data”. My attendance at this course is the result of a recommendation by a co-worker who took the course – and I, in turn, will be sure to also recommend this course to others. I recommend this course to anyone who has an interest (or need) to determine patterns in the data which reflects events or characteristics over a period of time. Useful juicy stuff!

Dr. Travis Anderson-Bond, Youth Justice, Queensland
Customised delivery

All MFSAS courses can be customised using your own data sets, and can be delivered at your premises. Minimum numbers for customised courses are 10 participants.

Course cost guide

All of our courses are charged at the standard rates of:

- $610 (online) per day
- $650 (face to face) per day

The following discounts are applicable for group, student and early bird bookings.

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Visit www.issr.uq.edu.au to learn more about the MFSAS program.

Email issr.education@uq.edu.au to design a customised course to meet your specific needs.