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 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 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 workshops 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 (3 days)

This course will provide you with qualitative skills to design, collect, analyse and make evidence-informed decisions based on qualitative data or qualitative data integrated with quantitative data (mixed methods). This course has an experiential design, providing opportunities to practice the skills learnt to undertake interviews, focus groups or visual methods and obtain feedback from the trainers in a supportive environment. The trainers use their extensive experience to provide real world examples of how this method is applied 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.

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 (2 days)

This two-day introduction to Program Evaluation 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.

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.

Introduction to Longitudinal Data Analysis and Panel Regression Models (2 days)

This two-day course provides participants with a thorough understanding of the structure, properties and uses of quantitative longitudinal survey datasets, as well the skills to confidently manage and analyse these. It combines comprehensive explanations with hands-on practical sessions using Stata® software and data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey.

Topics covered
- Longitudinal data - structure and management
- Exploratory longitudinal data analysis
- Panel regression - Pooled OLS, fixed-effect, random-effect and hybrid models
- Model choice for longitudinal data
- Presentation of results for longitudinal data

Learning objectives
- Understand the advantages of using longitudinal data for research and decision-making
- Manage longitudinal datasets and prepare these for statistical analysis
- Perform exploratory and descriptive panel data analyses
- Understand the different approaches that can be used to model multivariate relationships with longitudinal data (e.g., fixed-effect and random-effect regression models)
- Determine which modelling approach is most appropriate for different types of research questions
- Effectively present longitudinal data analyses results to technical and non-technical audiences
Social Cost-Benefit Analysis (3 days)

This course provides hands-on skills for professionals who need to conduct and engage with Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) to aid the design and evaluation of public programs and policies.

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.
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](http://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.