

Stellenbosch University

Introduction to Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (Module Outline)

Elective module of MSc Clinical Epidemiology and MPhil Health Systems

2022

This is an elective module of the Stellenbosch University Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences MSc Clinical Epidemiology and MPhil Health Systems. Students who are in their first or second year of study can select to do the module. The module is also registered through the university as a joint global masterclass short course with KU Leuven and is open to postgraduate students, faculty and other interested participants external to the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Short course participants can either apply for a certificate of attendance or competence, the latter requiring participants to complete assessments and examinations as required by formally enrolled masters students.

Overall objective of the module

The aim of this course is to provide students with the epistemological considerations and the fundamental methodological skills required for the design and implementation of a qualitative research synthesis (QES).

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be equipped with tools needed to write and implement a qualitative review protocol. Specifically, students should be able to:

- Differentiate between the types, purpose, and scope of QES.
- Select a topic and develop a well formulated research question.
- Identify and select the appropriate epistemological lens that you will use to frame your qualitative review.
- Design a basic search and screening strategy.
- Describe the screening and data extraction procedures in a QES.
- Identify and select the appropriate data synthesis method.
- Select and apply the appropriate critical appraisal tools for QES.
- Understand what confidence in a review finding is and how to assess it using GRADE-CERQUAL.
- Apply the fundamental background and skills required to design and write a protocol for a systematic review of qualitative evidence.
- Understand the reporting guidelines for QES.

Prerequisites

Participants should be able to read and understand original, qualitative research papers. Experience in conducting a systematic review and/or primary qualitative research will be helpful but is not a requirement of this module.

Course Conveners

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Course administrators

Anthea Henry – MSc Clinical Epidemiology (ahenry@sun.ac.za)

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Format

This is a 12-credit full semester module, i.e. 120 hours for this module. This module is offered in the first semester and is made up as follows:

- This is a blended module which includes both contact sessions, online engagement, peer exchange and self-study.
- There are session outlines for all contact and self-study sessions to guide your studying.
- Study materials will be available on the online learning platform (Sun Learn)
- Contact sessions will be synchronous and interactive.
- Self-study time will usually take the form of interactive lectures and practical sessions (putting theory into practice) interspersed throughout the module.

Assessments

There will be 3 formative assessments during the module that contribute 50% of your mark and, a summative assessment comprising 50% of your mark.

Formative (50%)

There will be one assignment and an assessment of class attendance and participation as formative assessments (weighted 50% together) during the module.

Attendance and Peer Support (5%):

- Students must attend all sessions and participate actively in sessions and group learning activities.

Assignment 1 (45%):

- Formulate the rationale and background of a QES protocol
 - Provide background information on the topic.
 - Why is it important to do the review?
 - Develop a review question appropriate for a qualitative review.
 - Identify and explain choice of epistemological lens.
 - Identify and explain choice of type of qualitative review.

Summative assessment (50%)

A summative assessment, in the form of portfolio of evidence of learning, will make up 50% of the final course mark.

Portfolio of evidence (50%):

- Complete the QES protocol
 - Contain marked Assignment 1 with reflection notes

- May contain additional evidence of learnings that show how the student engaged with the course materials and tools used to integrate learning.
- Design a basic search and screening strategy.
- Describe the screening and data extraction procedures in a QES.
- Describe an appropriate critical appraisal tool for the QES
- Identify and select the appropriate data synthesis method.
- Provide the reporting guideline to be used in the QES

Important Dates

| Assessment | Date |
|---|-------------------------|
| Class attendance and peer support (5%) | 28 March – 1 April 2022 |
| Assignment 1 submission (45%) | 28 April 2022 |
| Submission of portfolio of evidence (50%) | 30 May 2022 |

All assignments are to be submitted via SUNLearn with your student number (or names) clearly stated.

Please note that we have *strict deadlines for all assignments*. Assignments handed in after the due date and time will be penalised. These assignments are to reflect your individual work and not that of a group of students working/studying together. University guidelines related to *misconduct and dishonesty* will apply. Please make sure that you *keep a copy of your assignments* before handing it in for marking.

The module is externally moderated, and the external examiner retains the discretion to alter any mark based on assessment of the candidate's performance across the course (or course component) as a whole.

A pass mark of 50% is required overall, with a 45% sub-minimum on the formative and summative assessments.

Prescribed Reading

There is no prescribed textbook. The reading materials provided are organized around each session in the module.

General

Session outlines including recommended reading lists are provided for each session on SUNLearn. We encourage you to become familiar with the objectives of each session, and access and read the recommended material, as it will enhance your learning on this module. Any live session reading material and presentation slides will be posted on the learning platforms.

Module evaluation: Through your feedback we will be able to improve how the module is structured. Please complete the evaluation forms and feel free to send feedback to the convenor.

Internet access: Students will be required to use their own laptops and the majority of the work will require online internet access. Please ensure that you have adequate connectivity for the contact sessions.

Communication: Announcements will be made online via SUNLearn at the announcements tab. We will use the online learning platform to post additional readings and make announcements. Additionally, the programme makes extensive use of the class forums and students are encouraged to engage there as ask questions. For administrative queries use the 'administrative forum' for any content related questions use the respective forum. Please make sure your forum settings is enabled to track any forums activity by checking your forum settings in your SUNLearn profile.

Class register: We would like to be able to communicate with the whole class - please ensure that you provide correct contact details for this module. Course convenors will be taking registration for each contact session and tracking submission of all assignments on time.

Timelines and online etiquette

Please do check the timetable for when live contact sessions start. We advise students to login at least 15min before the session starts. Please consider online etiquette during all sessions. Some basics:

- Keep your video off unless you are asking a question, this is also to save bandwidth.
- Please keep your mic muted unless asking a question.
- Use the raise your hand function to prompt the facilitator when asking a question (click on participants tab to see it).
- Many convenors/students are working from home, often with family and kids in the background. Let's all be considerate and patient with each other.
- Contribute to focused critique in a professional manner
- Be on time for class and attend all lectures
- Participate in class discussions

Overview of module timetable

This module will include 5 days of contact sessions. Day 1 will be spent introducing QES and identifying a topic and draft question. Day 2 -5 we will join the QES Global Masterclass with students from KU Leuven.

| Date | Time and Outcomes | Format |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Monday, 28 March 2022 | 9:00am – 12:30pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to QES module • Qualitative versus quantitative research. • Types of reviews • QES in the evidence hierarchy | Self study (podcasts, reading and video) |
| Tuesday, 29 March 2022 | 9:00am – 16:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining a systematic review question and search methods • Sampling and selecting studies • Methodological quality assessment | Join QES Global Masterclass online (See schedule below for times) |
| Wednesday, 28 March 2022 | 9:00am – 16:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typologies of QES and epistemological frameworks • Data Extraction • Data synthesis methods in QES | Online classroom |
| Thursday, 28 March 2022 | 9:00am – 15:30pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data synthesis methods in QES • GRADE-CERQUAL • Protocol development and reporting guidelines | |
| Friday, 1 April 2022 | 9:00am – 12:30pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocol development and reporting guidelines • The QES project team • Experiences of QES • Examination and Assessments | |

ONLINE GLOBAL MASTERCLASS: QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

29 March – 1 April 2022

A joint initiative between Stellenbosch University, KU Leuven, Cochrane South Africa and University of the Western Cape

29 March 2022

| Session | Individual Learning | | Interactive engagement | | Facilitator |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Time | Activity | Time | Activity | |
| 1: Introduction to QES | 8:00-8:30 (BE) | Watch 20 min video | 8:30-9:15 (BE) | Welcome and introductions | K. Hannes/ L. Hendricks |
| | 9:00-9:30 (SA) | | 9:30-10:15 (SA) | | |
| 2: Defining a review question and searching | 9:15-10:15 (BE) | Watch 26 min video - RQ | 10:15- 11:00 (BE) | Group work and plenary | L. Hendricks |
| | 10:15-11:15 (SA) | Watch 26 min video -searching | 11:15- 12:00 (SA) | | |
| BREAK: 11:00- 11:15 (BE) AND 12:00-12:15 (SA) | | | | | |
| 3: Sampling and selecting studies | 11:15-11:45 (BE) | Watch 15 min video | 11:45-12:15 (BE) | Plenary: Sampling | S. Cooper |
| | 12:15-12:45 (SA) | | 12:45-13:15 (SA) | | |
| LUNCH: 12:15- 13:00 (BE) AND 13:15-14:00 (SA) | | | | | |
| 4: Methodological quality assessment | 13:00-13:30 (BE) | Watch 10 min video | 13:30-15:00 (BE) | Group work and plenary | K. Hannes |
| | 14:00-14:30 (SA) | Watch 20 min video | 14:30-16:00 (SA) | | |

30 March 2022

| Session | Individual Learning | | Interactive Engagement | | Facilitator |
|---|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| | Time | Activity | Time | Activity | |
| 5: Reflections | | | 8:00-8:45 (BE) 9:00-9:45 (SA) | Reflections 29 March 2022 | L. Hendricks |
| 6a: Typologies of QES and epistemological frameworks | 8:45-9:15 (BE) 9:45-10:15 (SA) | Watch 23 min video | 9:15-10:00 (BE) 10:15-11:00 (SA) | Group work | S. Cooper |
| <i>BREAK: 10:00-10:15 (BE) AND 11:00- 11:15 (SA)</i> | | | | | |
| 6b: Typologies of QES and epistemological frameworks | | | 10:15-10:45 (BE) 11:15-11:45 (SA) | Plenary: Typologies | S. Cooper |
| 7: Data Extraction | 10:45-11:15 (BE) 11:45-12:15 (SA) | Watch 22 min video | 11:15-12:15 (BE) 12:15-13:15 (SA) | Data extraction exercise | K. Hannes |
| <i>LUNCH: 12:15- 13:00 (BE) AND 13:15-14:00 (SA)</i> | | | | | |
| 8: Data synthesis methods in QES | 13:00-14:00 (BE) 14:00-15:00 (SA) | Watch 22 min video Watch 20 min video | 14:00-15:00 (BE) 15:00-16:00 (SA) | Plenary: Data extraction and synthesis | K. Hannes |

31 March 2022

| Session | Individual Learning | | Interactive Engagement | | Facilitator |
|---|---|--|--|--|-------------------------|
| | Time | Activity | Time | Activity | |
| 9: Reflections | | | 8:00-8:30 (BE) 9:00-9:30 (SA) | Reflections 30 March 2022 | L. Hendricks |
| 10: Data synthesis methods in QES | | | 8:30-9:30 (BE) 9:30-10:30 (SA) | Data extraction and synthesis group work | K. Hannes |
| | | | 9:30-10:00 (BE) 10:30-11:00 (SA) | Plenary: Data synthesis | K. Hannes/ L. Hendricks |
| | <i>BREAK: 10:00-10:15 (BE) AND 11:00- 11:15 (SA)</i> | | | | |
| 11: GRADE-CERQUAL | 10:15-11:00 (BE) 11:15-12:00 (SA) | Watch GRADE-CERQUAL videos 45 mins https://www.cerqual.org/grade-cerqual-videos/ | 11:00-11:45 (BE) 12:00-12:45 (SA) | GRADE-CERQUAL Exercise | B.Schmidt |
| | | | 11:45-12:15 (BE) 12:45-13:15 (SA) | Plenary: GRADE-CERQUAL | B.Schmidt |
| <i>LUNCH: 12:15- 13:00 (BE) AND 13:15-14:00 (SA)</i> | | | | | |
| 12: Protocol development and reporting guidelines | 13:00-13:30 (BE) 14:00-14:30 (SA) | Watch 20 min video Watch 5 min video | 13:30-14:00 (BE) 14:30-15:00 (SA) | MIRO onboarding and group allocation | L.Hendricks |

1 April 2022

| Session | Individual Learning | | Interactive Engagement | | Facilitator |
|---|---------------------|----------|--|--|-------------------------|
| | Time | Activity | Time | Activity | |
| 13: Reflections | | | 8:00-8:30 (BE) 9:00-9:30 (SA) | Reflections 31 March 2022 | L. Hendricks |
| 14: Protocol map and presentations | | | 8:30-9:15 (BE) 9:30-10:15 (SA) | Collaborative proposal maps | L. Hendricks/ K. Hannes |
| | | | 9:15-10:00 (BE) 10:15-11:00 (SA) | Group Presentations | L. Hendricks/ K. Hannes |
| <i>BREAK: 10:00-10:15 (BE) AND 11:00- 11:15 (SA)</i> | | | | | |
| 15: Panel Discussion and Close Out | | | 10:15-11:00 (BE) 11:15-12:00 (SA) | Plenary: The QES experience and the project team. Q and A and course close out. | L. Hendricks/ K. Hannes |
| 16: Masters Registered Students only – Assessments | | | 11:00 -11:30 12:00-12:30 | Exam | L. Hendricks/ K. Hannes |