

September 2024 | Version 2

Training on Religions and Development Research Course

Module 2:
Doing Research

Session 2:
Research Design



Joint Learning Initiative
on Faith & Local Communities

Homework (pre-session)



Essential reading

(everyone is required to read this)

Please choose one from the following lists (i.e., each student reads/watches a total of three resources—one from each of the three lists) and makes notes on the key points.

Essential resource 1 (pick one from the list) - Research design

- Norman, Pat (2020): Research Design (in 3 minutes).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJKIL6EluFU>
- Scribbr (2021): How to Create a Strong Research Design: 2-minute Summary.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwRIhMstlNg>.
- Scribbr (2021): Research Design: Choosing a Type of Research Design.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNo-MlIdPZ8>.

Essential resource 2 (pick one from the list) - Research aims and objectives

- Research Tube (2023): Understanding Research Questions and Objectives [Video-2]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JilzYGir3Ys>
- Scribbr (2021): Research Design: Defining Your Research Aims and Approach.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Dd8P6lYzdE>.
- Thompson, Pat (2014): aims and objectives – what's the difference?
<https://patthomson.net/2014/06/09/aims-and-objectives-whats-the-difference/>

Essential resource 3 (pick one from the list) - Research questions

- Scribbr (2020): How to Develop a STRONG Research Question.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71-GucBaM8U>.
- Thompson, Pat (2018): bad research questions.
<https://patthomson.net/2018/03/19/writing-bad-research-questions/>
- Thompson, Pat (2014): thinking about research questions.
<https://patthomson.net/2014/09/08/thinking-about-research-questions/>.

Engaging with the readings

(1 hour)

This part of the session aims to engage with the readings that the students did as part of their homework in more detail. It aims to give the students a chance to discuss the readings, share their reflections, and consolidate their understanding of the texts.

- 1. Introduction (5 min):** The instructor reminds students that the group has now moved to module 2 of the course. The first part of the course focused on engaging with some of the key questions in religions and development research, such as gender, peacebuilding, climate change, and so on. This second part of the course will allow students to better understand how research and evidence on these key issues are produced. It will provide them with the tools to assess claims to knowledge and perhaps even think about producing research and evidence themselves. The instructor also explains that research methods, which will be covered in this second part of the course, can sometimes seem a bit dry or even boring at first, but that is often due to the topic being new. Students should try to remember that understanding how research is produced provides learners with the tools to challenge knowledge production and, therefore, a significant amount of power to shape societal debates.
- 2. Group work (25 min):** The instructor divides students into three groups, with each group working on one of the three areas covered by the homework resources. If possible, students should be divided into groups depending on which resource they have read/watched (e.g., student A has watched resources from lists 1 and 2, so it would make most sense for them to be in either group 1 or 2).
 - Group 1: what is research design, and why it is important for us to know about it (essential resource 1)
 - Group 2: what are research aims and objectives, and why it is important for us to know about them (essential resource 2)
 - Group 3: what are research questions, and what does a good research question look like (essential resource 3)

Before the group work starts, the instructor explains to students that they should discuss the topic and make a list of all key points. This list should then be written on a poster (one for each group) displayed in the classroom. Students need to write legibly.

3. **Gallery walk and additions (10 min)**: Students are given markers and time to walk from poster to poster and add any key points they would like to make to the other groups' posters. They can also add questions if they have any.
4. **Big group discussions (15 min)**: The instructor walks students from one poster to the next and goes through the poster's content with them to ensure that everyone has gotten all the key points. The instructor adds any missing information or asks students to create examples if necessary. The instructor can also give two examples (e.g., research questions for a particular topic) and ask the students which one they would choose. Then, the instructor can discuss the pros and cons, etc.
5. **Partner discussion (10 min)**: The instructor gives students some time to discuss their learning in groups of two, focusing on the following questions: What have they learned? What do they still find unclear/difficult? What can they do to increase their understanding of these questions?

Contextualising the learning

(1 hour)

The aim of this part of the session is for students to apply what they learned from the readings and the first part of the session to their local contexts. It encourages them to think critically about the extent to which the debates from the readings are relevant to their everyday lives, studies, or work.

1. **Break (5 min)**
2. **Individual work (10 min)**: The instructor asks students to think of a topic they find interesting and relevant to their work/personal experience. Each student is then asked to write down thoughts on how they could develop the research design, research aims and objectives, and research questions for their topic of choice. Students can refer to the homework readings/resources and look up things on the Internet if necessary, but they should work on this independently, not with any other students in the classroom.
3. **Partner work (10 min)**: Students work in groups of two, comparing their notes and giving each other advice on how to improve the approach they have developed independently.
4. **Small group work (15 min)**: Each group of two students gets joined by another group of two. Each group presents to the other group what they have worked on, what advice they have given each other, what questions they still have, and the other group shares their advice and thoughts.
5. **Individual work (5 min)**: Each student spends some time on their own, thinking about what open questions they still have and making a list if necessary.
6. **Q&A and big group discussion (15 min)**: The instructor encourages students to share their remaining questions, encourages others to help answer them, and, if necessary, shares their own thoughts and/or recommends further readings/resources.

Creative task

(1 hour)

The third part of the session is aimed at engaging with the content covered in parts 1 and 2 of the session in a creative manner. This part of the session acknowledges the fact that there are different types of learners. It also aims to expose students to creative and arts-based forms of learning and teaching.

1. **Break (5 min)**
2. **Small group work—introduction (5 min)**: The instructor explains to students that they will prepare collaborative creative outputs that summarise the key concepts and discussions they have covered today. This could include a collage (the instructor will need to have brought old magazines/newspapers, scissors, glue/scotch tape for this), a drawing, a comic, a poem, etc. Students can suggest other types of outputs. The instructor writes all ideas on the whiteboard.
3. **Pitch (5 min)**: Students get to pitch their ideas to the big group, and everyone then decides which group they would like to work with. If groups are very big, they can be divided, and several groups can work on producing the same type of output, but instructors should encourage students to try different types of things.
4. **Small group work—production (25 min)**: Each group works on producing its output. If groups finish early, instructors can encourage them to refine their work, include additional aspects, or start a new output.
5. **Gallery walk and preparation of questions/comments (10 min)**: Students walk from output to output in their groups, examine each, and prepare questions or comments they can share with the others. They nominate one commentator who can share their comments with the others.
6. **Presentations and comments (10 min)**: Each group nominates a presenter who shares the work with the others. After the work is shared, the commentators share their thoughts. In the end, the instructor congratulates everyone and shares some concluding thoughts.

