Planning Template 3:

Selecting your methods/methodology

The selection of your methods can also be a stressful process. Many students worry about getting this ‘right’. A big decision is deciding which method and methodology to use, with debates such as whether projects should implement single or multiple methods. Ultimately, this **decision depends on your research aims and objectives, as well as your methodology**. So if in doubt and you remain stuck on this, **return to the question of what drives the research and think about how best you can ‘get at’ this.**

One way to select your method or methodology is to think of this decision making process as **a process of elimination**, which will help you identify some suitable methods and methodological approaches, and their limitations. Planning Template 3 takes you step-by-step through this process.

# Step 1:

Start with one of your research questions. Map out in Table 1 and Table 2 how you would do the project with different methods and methodological approaches.

## Table 1

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Possible methodology 1.**  | **Possible methodology 2.** | **Possible methodology 3.** | **What are the limitations?** |
| **Research Question 1** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research Question 2** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research Question 3** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research Question 4….** |  |  |  |  |

## Table 2

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Possible method 1.**  | **Possible method 2.** | **Possible method 3.** | **What are the limitations?** |
| **Research Question 1** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research Question 2** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research Question 3** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research Question 4….** |  |  |  |  |

# Step 2:

Consider the potential limitations of each method and methodological approach, and complete the final column in Table 1 and Table 2.

It is worth remembering that these completed tables will be useful when writing the dissertation in full (reflexive and critical thinking is important), so keep hold of this list!

# Step 3:

Take a look at Table 3. To complete Table 3, you will need to have chosen some possible methods and methodologies using the information from Tables 1 and 2. The idea of Table 3 is to help you to imagine (or hypothesise) what the data might look like. Whilst you cannot be sure of this at this stage of the process (research is a tricky and messy process-expect the unexpected!), on completion of your literature review you will have a good idea of how the data turn out. Thinking about the end of the dissertation now can be useful to allow you to think about the process of getting there and deciding what works and what methods/methodology to pick.

## Table 3

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Methodology 1** | **Methodology 2** | **Methodology 3** | **What might the findings look like?** |
| **Chosen method 1** |  |  |  |  |
| **Chosen method 2** |  |  |  |  |
| **Chosen method 3** |  |  |  |  |
| **Chosen method 4….** |  |  |  |  |

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