

Some quick advice about the project report

- Based on recent questions from students –

About the structure/table of content of your report:

I would like to stress once again that these projects have to focus on your own actual empirical testing on members of a target group – it is not about theories or history or other people's research or discussions about urbanization (or whatever your topic or problem definition is about) that you find in books or online.

Here is an answer to one group: Of course, it could be relevant in your project to have a very short history of urbanization in DK with a focus on the last one or two generations. That is, if your main problem formulation/research question is something like this (this is what I have understood, but you might have changed it now?):

How does young people in Denmark today think, feel, and talk about choosing between living in a big city versus living in a small town/village or in the countryside?

Then your report should have some sort of structure like this – I am here indicating a normal standard, and numbers of pages, just to guide you – but you can/may very well deviate from this:

Suggested distribution of pages:

1 page of intro - about your motivation in the group (you happened to talk one day about your different backgrounds and your visions for future living (city/country)

2 pages - about the historical-social background (recent 50 years or so) and why with climate change, pandemics and war in Europe (or whatever) the question of future life quality has become – so it may seem (to you?) - topical, urgent and interesting to do some research about. So, you want to do a small qualitative study (an explorative study), which is what you are planning to do:

1 page – problem definition, research sub-questions,

1 – 2 pages - definitions of central terms, delimitation (what you are not doing).

1 – 2 pages (perhaps, if relevant for your study), introducing some modern sociological, psychological, or life-style concepts that might help you in exploring this, asking better questions and interpreting answers in a more academic fashion.

1 - 2 pages about other recent empirical (rather detailed, perhaps) studies relevant or close to your main focus.

3 pages about how and why you decided on doing specific empirical investigations: focus group, single-interviews, expert interviews, following online fora (netnography),

quick-and-dirty questionnaire/vox pop, combinations of methods; and how you decided what would be relevant/practically feasible in your case.

3 pages about practical planning (working out interview guides, questionnaire, tracking down your target group, finding people willing to participate etc.

2 pages about how the interviews actually were conducted and what happened (how would you do better next time?).

Another 3 pages about the other thing you did – the questionnaire/ the online observations – how did you do, what could be done better next time.

3 pages with your immediate results/answers, and an explanation of how you condensed it /analyzed it into some specific themes and answers to your research questions.

2 pages of comparison/interpretation with relevant theories/concepts for psychology, sociology etc.

3 pages where you go on with an overall interpretation of what you have found: What was new/surprising in this, what seems to be the mayor feelings, thoughts and discourses (ways of talking) about living in the city/country for young DK people today? Perspectives for the future?

3 pages of reflections on your own method and process, what could be improved, investigated more the next time.

1 page - some overall concluding remarks about what you have learned from this type of work (academically).

Reference list.

A popular article (about an aspect of your study) 1 -3 pages

Explanation of article 1-2 pages.

About analysis of interviews etc.

There is not "one and only one right way" to do an analysis of interviews (or other material) in a project like this. Don't try to imagine only what your "school" probably want/usually requires in standard projects. But look at your own problem formulation and focus and main interest: what is it you want to know more about?

And then, what is it you can see or hear in the interviews? Some things are there to see immediately (is this person positive or negative towards this or that), other things and more details can only be found by means of some analysis and interpretation. "Analyzing" actually means to divide into parts. But how you divide into parts and how you find the main themes or categories – that is not an automatic process, you have to interpret the parts in light of the whole, and the whole in light of the parts

(that is the hermeneutical wisdom). You can then try to categorize or “code” these parts into different “boxes” – you are sort of placing the different statements and expression of emotions and attitudes and beliefs on different shelves in the “storehouse” you have invented for this purpose of getting an overview of what is going on here (in the interviews).

“Interpretation” of an interview cannot be left to the calculation of a computer program (like Nvivo), because such programs can only deal with transcriptions – verbal texts that by their very nature miss some of the original “live” interview text (“text” in a wide sense here) like gestures, tone of voice, passion, pauses, irony, situational circumstances. Programs (like Nvivo) can calculate the appearances of specific words or phrases (chosen, by the way, by the researcher, not the machine), which can be useful if you want to skim huge amounts of written texts. But a live conversation needs intelligent and attentive human interpretation: A six-year-old boy once said: “Well, I do know that burgers are not really good for my body” when he was shown pictures of junk food and vegetables. He was twisting and turning in his chair and evidently would much prefer to eat a burger and not a salad. But transcribed and coded the “data” in the students’ report was: “This respondent preferred vegetables”!

Sometimes you can think in terms of discourse analysis, and get inspiration from that (looking for current popular expressions, metaphors, narratives, oppositions (good guys/bad guys), or you can think in terms of rhetoric (what about the logos, ethos, pathos – what do you see/hear as dominant in different responses? Or you can think about a “stylistic analysis” (like often demanded by an English teacher in school): what is the style, choice of words, arguments, what stands out, what is dominant? You can also look for arguments in a narrower sense: what premises (said or implied) lead to what conclusion in the responses from this interviewee (in the terms of Toulmin, if you know him: what Data and Warrant can you see are being used to establish a Claim (and what about Rebuttal, Backing and Qualifier?)).

So, you can go to many different background theories or analytical concepts in order to try to extract from you interviews what these people say and feel and believe. It is not just a mechanical procedure applying one single tool of categorizing (like it is when you do a quantitative study: how many are positive and how many are negative towards vaccine?). No, you are looking for qualitative nuances, people’s strange ways of looking at things and odd ways of talking about them – probably different from your own views and mine (the report-readers) views. But that is where your study and report can make us wiser about (some members of) this target-group and how they understand (and misunderstand, perhaps, in our eyes) communication and the state of affairs regarding Corona etc...

And yes, then you have to make it transparent in your report how you have actually been doing the analysis of your interviews. Did you just talk about it in the group and

all agreed on what was the most important statements and results? Or did you, maybe, split up and try to avoid personal bias and popular quick interpretations: e.g. you could let the one group member conduct the actual interview write a short resume of what was the most important results here (from this group member's point of view). And then you can have other group members write their short resume based on listening to the recording of the interview. Do you arrive at the same main findings? You can make your interpretation and resumes of the interviews (or observations or questionnaires etc.) more solid by explaining/making transparent just how you went about "concluding" from your material. Don't just let it be a black box.

Well, that was a short and simple answer, was it not 😊

The "article" is not well described anywhere, I find it rather irritating too!

Actually, as for now, it just has to be there (according to study regulations and study.ruc.dk), and usually does not change the final grade. The oral presentation/discussion usually is much more influential on final result. But if the article is not there, it will be difficult to give absolute top grade, and it just might subtract from the overall impression of your fine work 😊

A description of the article and the "explanation" of the article – there is not much to find at study.ruc.dk, nor in the English study regulations. Page-requirements are set to (1-3 for the article and 1-2 pages for the description of the article).

If you can read Danish, it might be informative for you if you read the Danish version of it on study.ruc.dk. Here it is called a "formidlingsartikel" and that makes some sense to a Danish ruc'er, but is hard to translate.

The idea is that everybody doing a research project on RUC, be it in biology, chemistry or whatever (communication, in this case) should also demonstrate their capability for writing a more "popular" version explaining the (complicated and advanced) research (or some aspect of it) to some interested (or innocent, perhaps non-academic even!) public (or target group).

So, you can imagine that you (as a group) write a short "journalistic" story about your research (content/ or process) and aim it for a facebook group or an online campus paper, or an existing paper or journal. Make it light and perhaps even entertaining.

You do not actually have to publish it. And in the "explanation" (of this article) you write shortly about why you have chosen this form, for which target group, why this style, choice of words, lay-out, illustrations perhaps and so on. The "explanation" is

like a very short “communication plan” for the article. Note that it is only one or two pages for each part (max 3 for the article itself). And that it is included in your word-count for the report – put it in the same file, after the conclusion and references of the main report.

Number of pages

Do not go over or under the page limits (normal pages are defined as 2400 hits per page). The system does not listen to arguments – it just counts like a machine (it is a machine!), and it has no ears, no pity, no mercy.

In an appendix you can put a lot of working material, drafts, illustrations, transcriptions (if you have wasted your time on that), sound files, videos etc. But don't count on it being studied in any detail – it is just “nice to have”).

About plagiarism –

Whenever you quote or just indirectly paraphrase from somebody else (an article, a book, another report) be sure to mark it and indicate where it is from. Even if you are quoting/paraphrasing from one of your own previous reports or essays – you should be sure to mark it clearly. Otherwise, you risk to be accused of “plagiarism” – and it is an automatic program in Digital Exam that runs the checking – and you cannot later argue with that machine and say sorry, I just forgot a reference or a quotation mark. Well, you can argue, but it doesn't help. Your exam paper might be rejected completely, and your status as active student is at risk. Sad stories are out there, don't let it happen to you.