**Methodology Chapter Template**

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| This document provides a generic template for a typical methodology chapter/section within a dissertation or thesis. Given that it is publicly accessible, the file is read-only. **To customise it, select “File”, followed by ‘’Make a copy’’ or “Download”**. |

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| **WHERE TO START** |

If you’re new to the process of writing up a methodology chapter/section, you can ask for some guidance from our Academics. You can [access that here](https://www.hamnicwritingservices.com/contact-us).

There are some useful resources on methodology chapter on our blog. You can [access it here](https://www.blog.hamnicwritingservices.com/).

**PLEASE REMEMBER** - always follow any guidelines or templates that your university or institution provides. The template we provide here follows a generic, commonly used structure, but some institutions have unique requirements or specific priorities. Moreover, this template is geared toward studies within the social sciences. So, make sure that you thoroughly digest and adhere to any instructions they’ve provided.

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| **WHERE TO GET MORE HELP** |

If you’d like 1-on-1 assistance with your methodology (or any other part of your research project), consider our private coaching service, where we hold your hand through the process, step by step. You can  [book a free initial consultation here](https://www.hamnicwritingservices.com/contact-us).

Introduction

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| The purpose of this section is to introduce your reader to the chapter and help orient them in terms of what to expect. This is usually quite short, consisting of just a couple of paragraphs.  Depending on the nature of your project, it’s common to cover the following in this section:   * A quick reminder of your [**research problem**](https://www.hamnicwritingservices.com/) and consequently, your [**research aims**](https://www.hamnicwritingservices.com/). * A brief explanation of the **purpose** of the chapter (i.e. to outline your methodological approach to achieving your research aims) * A brief overview outlining the **structure**/layout of the chapter   Keep this section concise. There’s no need to go into detail – save your word count for the body section (up next), as that is where you’ll earn marks. |

Next, you’ll move into the **body section** of your methodology chapter, where you’ll outline your methodological approach in detail.

Generally, it’s a good idea to structure your body discussion in an “inverted pyramid style”, starting with the most high-level, **conceptual** and **strategic** choices and working your way down to the more **practical**, **tactical** choices. For example, you could follow a structure that looks something like the following:

1. Research philosophy (e.g., interpretivist, positivist, etc.)
2. Research approach (e.g., qualitative, quantitative or mixed)
3. Research design (e.g., descriptive, correlational, etc.)
4. Sampling strategy (e.g., random stratified sampling, convenience sampling, etc.)
5. Data collection and analysis techniques

However, this is not set in stone. Depending on your degree program and level of study, some of these will be less relevant than others and some may not be required at all. So, pay close attention to your institution’s guidance documents and requirements, and if possible, try to review past dissertations/theses from your specific program to get a feel for the norms.

In this template, we’ll present a structure that covers five important methodological matters (as outlined above). This structure is loosely based on Saunders’ “research onion”, of which you can visit our blog to learn more about. You can [access it here](https://www.blog.hamnicwritingservices.com/).

Research philosophy

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| Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs, assumptions, and principles that will guide your approach to conducting your research. There are several research philosophies to choose from, including **positivism**, **interpretivism** and **pragmatism**:  **Positivism** emphasises the use of scientific methods and seeks to uncover universal laws and generalisable knowledge. It assumes an objective reality that can be studied through empirical observation and measurement. Positivists aim for objectivity, reliability, and replicability in their research.  **Interpretivism**, on the other end of the spectrum, focuses on understanding and interpreting human behaviour and social phenomena through the lens of subjective meanings and social contexts. It recognises the importance of individual experiences, values, and interpretations. Interpretivists often use qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, to explore the richness and complexity of social phenomena.  **Pragmatism** sits somewhere in the middle and takes a practical and problem-solving approach to research. It emphasizes the use of mixed methods and acknowledges the value of both quantitative and qualitative data. Pragmatists are concerned with finding effective solutions and generating useful knowledge that can be applied to real-world situations.  It's worth noting that research philosophies are not necessarily mutually exclusive - researchers sometimes combine elements from different philosophies based on their research aim and questions. Importantly, your choice of research philosophy should align with and support your [research aims, objectives and questions](https://www.hamnicwritingservices.com/). So, in this section, be sure to detail both **what** philosophy you’ll be adopting and **why** you’ve chosen to do so. |

### Research approach

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| Next up, you’ll typically discuss your research approach - in other words, qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods.  **Qualitative** research is focused on understanding and interpreting the meaning, context, and subjective experiences of individuals or groups. It typically draws on **text-based data** and aims to explore complex social phenomena, often using open-ended questions, observations, interviews, focus groups, or analysis of textual or visual data.  **Quantitative** research involves the systematic collection and analysis of **numerical data** to test hypotheses, examine patterns, and establish relationships between variables. It aims to quantify and generalise findings to a larger population. This method uses structured data collection instruments such as surveys, experiments, or existing datasets.  Lastly, **mixed methods** research combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It involves collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or across multiple phases of research. The purpose is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem by integrating different types of data.  In this section, once again, you’ll need to clearly state which approach you’ve chosen and why you’ve made that choice specifically. Importantly, your choice should **align with your research philosophy** (the previous section). For example, if you adopted an interpretivist philosophy, you’d likely take a qualitative approach as this naturally supports interpretivist enquiry. |

Research strategy/design

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| Next up is the research strategy, also known as the research design. The research design refers to the **overall plan**, structure or strategy that guides a research project, from its conception to the final data analysis. There are many potential options here, but for the sake of simplicity, we’ll list the most common ones for both qualitative and quantitative studies:  Common research designs for **qualitative** studies:   * Phenomenological design * Grounded theory * Ethnographic * Case study   Common research designs for **quantitative** studies:   * Descriptive * Correlational * Experimental * Quasi-experimental   Again, make sure that your choice here aligns with your previous choices (philosophy and approach), as well as your overall research aims and research questions.  To learn more about research design, be sure to check out [our blog articles on the same here.](https://www.blog.hamnicwritingservices.com/) |

Sampling strategy

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| Your sampling strategy refers to the process you’ll adopt in terms of selecting a **subset of participants** from a larger group of interest. For example, if your research involved assessing US consumers’ perceptions about a particular brand of laundry detergent, you wouldn’t be able to collect data from every single person that uses laundry detergent – but you could potentially collect data from a smaller subset of this group.  There are two overarching approaches to sampling under which all sampling methods can be classified: probability and non-probability.  **Probability sampling** - focuses on achieving a random sample that is representative of the population of interest. Popular sampling methods within this category include:   * Simple random sampling * Stratified random sampling * Cluster sampling * Systematic sampling   **Non-probability sampling** - is less concerned with achieving a random or representative sample. Popular sampling methods within this category include:   * Purpose sampling * Convenience sampling * Snowball sampling   As with all methodological choices, your sampling strategy needs to firmly **align with your broader research aims**. For example, if you want to be able to generalise your findings to the broader population, you’ll have to adopt one of the probability-based sampling methods. |

Data collection method(s)

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| Next, you’ll discuss how you’ll go about collecting the data required for your study. In this section, it’s best to provide **as much detail as possible** to demonstrate that you’ve thought through the practical aspects of your study. You’ll also need to state whether you’ll be taking a cross-sectional or longitudinal approach.  For qualitative studies, data collection methods could include:   * Interviews * Focus groups * Observations * Document analysis   On the quantitative side, collection methods could include:   * Surveys * Measurements * Data from lab equipment * Existing datasets   As always, it’s essential that you explain both the **what** and the **why** - i.e. how you’ll be collecting data and why you chose to take that approach. |

Data analysis method(s)

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| Last but not least, you’ll need to discuss how you’ll analyse your data. Commonly, you’ll use only **one analysis method** (mono-method), but in some cases, it may make sense to take a **multi-method approach**. As usual, you’ll need to state your approach and justify each choice you make here.  On the quantitative side, you’ll almost always need to start with some descriptive statistics. Then, depending on your research aims and questions, you may also make use of various inferential statistical tests, such as:   * T-tests * ANOVA * Correlation * Regression |

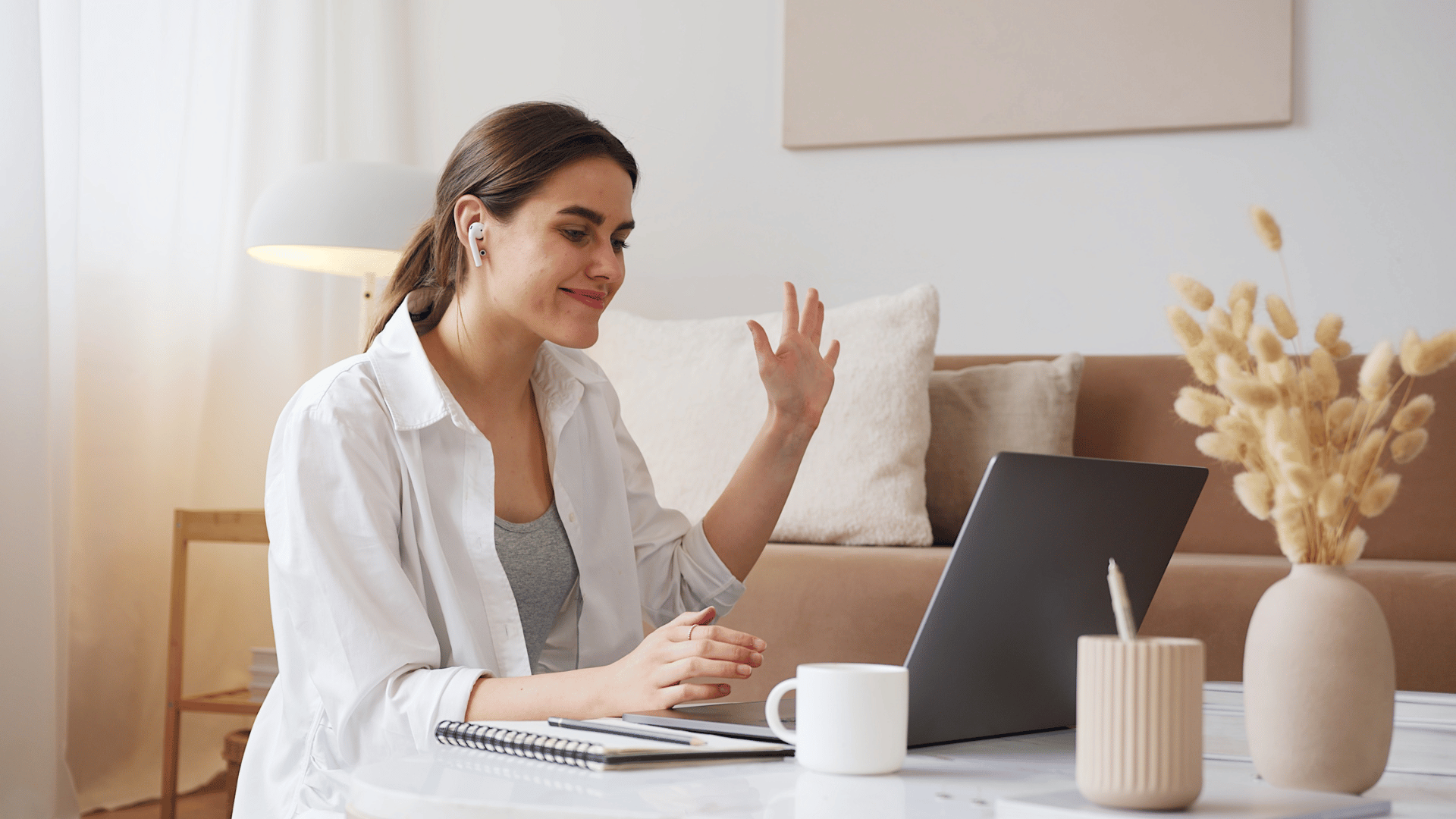
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Conclusion

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| In this section, you should aim to concisely summarise what you’ve presented in the chapter in a paragraph or two maximum. Be careful to include only what you’ve already discussed in your chapter (i.e., don’t add any new information).  Here’s an example of what this might look like in practice:  *This chapter commenced by restating the research objective and question, thereafter presenting a hypothesis-driven theoretical framework in response to the research question. A quantitative methodological approach was argued for based on the correlational nature of the study, access to data, and contextual appropriateness. The next chapter will apply the chosen methodology to analyse the data and test the hypotheses.* |

Need more help?

The methodology chapter is commonly the one that students struggle with the most (and understandably so!). If you’d like a helping hand through the process (or just a second set of eyes to make sure your plan is sound), consider our hands-on [private coaching service](https://www.hamnicwritingservices.com/contact-us).



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