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Undergraduate public health students and perceptions of qualitative research: A trajectory of understanding from *airy fairy* to a valuable tool.

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- Sendall, MC et al. (2013). Nurses and teachers: partnerships for green health promotion. *Journal of School Health*, p. 508-513.
- Sendall, MC et al. (2013). School nurses and partnerships for health education: Team teaching in the secondary school curricula. *Learning and Teaching*, p. 51-77.

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**Undergraduate public health students and perceptions of qualitative research:
A trajectory of understanding from *airy fairy* to a valuable tool.**

Suggested running head: *Undergraduate students' perceptions of qualitative research*

Suggested keywords: *evidence-based practice; higher education; public health; qualitative; students' perceptions; teaching and learning; undergraduate*

Abstract

Many undergraduate public health students enter introductory qualitative research units with limited or negative perceptions of qualitative research, potentially compromising learning outcomes. Unit teaching, structure and assessment provide opportunities for students to develop positive perceptions of qualitative research. Through a mixed-methods study of undergraduate public health students enrolled in a qualitative research unit, we establish students' perceptions of qualitative research at the commencement and conclusion of the unit, and determine the critical teaching and learning events which contributed to positive changes in students' perceptions. This study demonstrates that the structuring of an introductory qualitative research unit around varied opportunities for experiential learning provides a positive introductory learning experience and enables undergraduate public health students to recognise the real-world uses and value of qualitative research.

Introduction

The teaching of qualitative research methods at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in tertiary institutes is now relatively commonplace (DeLyser, 2008). However, many undergraduate public health students enter introductory qualitative research units lacking an accurate foundational understanding of qualitative research methodologies (Cooper, Fleischer & Cotton, 2012; Sidell, 2008). This is because qualitative research is frequently taught as a stand-alone unit, and qualitative research methodologies are poorly integrated with both the teaching and, though to a lesser extent, practice of public health (Mitchell, Friesen, Friesen & Rose, 2007). However,

students' inaccurate perceptions of qualitative research can significantly compromise their learning experiences and outcomes in units teaching qualitative research methodology. The evidence suggests that the effective response of unit educators to these perceptions can have a significant positive impact on students' learning (Barrett, 2007; Richards, 2011; Xu & Storr, 2012). Effective responses may involve aspects of unit structure, teaching and assessment.

Qualitative research is an essential tool for the discipline of public health. Qualitative research focuses on exploring peoples' perceptions and experiences, and can enable a public health researcher to gain a richer understanding of the complexities which underpin most public health problems (and, indeed, the quantitative data which may identify these problems). These insights can be used to inform responses to public health problems which are more reflexive, perceptive and, ultimately, successful. It is for these reasons that the effective teaching of qualitative research methodologies to future public health practitioners is of such importance.

Understanding undergraduate public health students' perceptions of qualitative research is critical to informing responsive teaching practices. This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of undergraduate students' perceptions of qualitative research at the commencement, and again at the conclusion, of an introductory qualitative research unit offered at a university in Australia. This paper then considers critical teaching and learning events which contribute to a *change* in students' perceptions of qualitative research across the semester.

Literature Review

A comprehensive review of the literature returned a small number of papers discussing students' perceptions of qualitative research and introductory qualitative research units offered by tertiary institutions. Literature about the perceptions of undergraduate public health students specifically is scarce, and there is no research which reports the perceptions of students in the Australian context. The literature reviewed here focuses predominately on teaching practices and learning experiences in introductory qualitative research units.

This literature review identifies that many introductory qualitative research units are structured in an experiential learning format, with students required to complete an assessed semi-independent qualitative research project across the semester. Students perceive such a unit structure to be beneficial, as supervised real-world practice provides opportunities to develop proficiency and confidence in professional qualitative research skills (DeLyser, 2008; Machtmes et al., 2009; Stadtlander & Giles, 2010). Additionally, experiential learning makes students' introduction to qualitative research more engaging, enjoyable and empowering (Holtslander, Racine, Furniss, Burles & Turner, 2012; Levy & Petrusis, 2011; Raddon, Nault & Scott, 2008).

The literature indicates this experiential learning philosophy is frequently carried through to the teaching of qualitative research theory. The majority of introductory qualitative research units involve extensive in-class practical activities to reinforce theoretical concepts. Such exercises are also designed to support students to practice qualitative research techniques such as reflexivity, coding and interviewing, which cannot be taught as isolated theory (DeLyser, 2008; Stadtlander & Giles, 2010). The literature indicates students again perceive such an experiential approach favourably as it enables the productive, collaborative exploration of complex concepts and the practice of new skills in a safe environment (Barrett, 2007).

Despite the experiential approach, however, many students experience difficulties in understanding the complexities of qualitative data collection, analysis and interpretation. The lack of a defined structure in qualitative data enquiry is particularly disconcerting (Xu & Storr, 2012). Many students enter qualitative research units with the expectation they will be taught a straightforward, universally-applicable system to qualitative enquiry; they find the true subjective nature of qualitative data enquiry to be deeply challenging (Wright, 2007). Consequently, learning qualitative research can be a highly emotive experience for many students (Cooper et al., 2012).

The literature made little distinction between students' perceptions of the teaching of qualitative research, versus their perceptions of the qualitative research methodology itself. However, the literature does highlight the general perception among both students and professionals in the fields of health and social work that qualitative research methodologies are less useful, credible

or legitimate than quantitative ones (Benton, Androff, Barr & Taylor, 2011; Xu & Storr, 2012). Students in particular have complex perceptions of qualitative research methodologies and the processes used to teach them; among students studying introductory qualitative research units, qualitative research methodologies are perceived to be generally ambiguous, convoluted and even irrelevant (Barrett, 2007; Mitchell, Friesen, Friesen & Rose, 2007; Richards, 2011; Siddell, 2008).

No research was found which comprehensively considers undergraduate public health students' perceptions of qualitative research at both the commencement and conclusion of an introductory qualitative research unit. There is no research which examines whether, and how, public health students' perceptions of qualitative research *change* during their introductory experience, or the specific events which contribute to a change. The literature indicates the effective response of educators to students' initial perceptions of qualitative research has a significant impact on students' learning outcomes (Barrett, 2007; Richards, 2011; Xu & Storr 2012). Understanding students' perceptions and the factors which inform these is therefore essential. This research addresses these important gaps in knowledge.

Background

Qualitative Inquiry in Public Health (PUB461) is an undergraduate unit offered by the School of Public Health and Social Work at a university in Australia. The fundamental aim of PUB461 is to teach the skills and knowledge necessary to enable undergraduate public health students to appreciate, appraise and apply qualitative research methodologies in their future professional practice. Adhering to evidence-based practice, the unit focuses on the provision of experiential learning opportunities in unit teaching and assessment. As illustrated in Figure 1, this research sampled students in the PUB461 cohorts of Semester 2, 2011 ($n = 20$) and Semester 2, 2012 ($n = 38$). All students were studying the PU40 Bachelor of Health Science (Public Health) or a related double-degree, and the majority were completing their second year of study.

- Insert **Figure 1**. Demographic information for students enrolled in PUB461 in Semester 2, 2011 and Semester 2, 2012.

As illustrated in Figure 2, undergraduate public health students studying PUB461 are presented with a series of thirteen 'lectorial' classes across a semester. The lectorial topics progress sequentially, reflecting the completion of a real-world qualitative research project. Theoretical knowledge is reinforced through related weekly in-class activities, which focus on developing students' practical research skills.

The assessment for PUB461 is structured as a semi-independent qualitative research project which students complete on a public health topic of their choice. Whilst the assessment between the 2011 and 2012 PUB461 cohorts differed slightly, the conceptual learning aim of each set of assessments was fundamentally similar. It is important to understand students' perceptions of, and learning experiences in relation to, qualitative research in order to design and structure teaching and assessment in a way that helps students develop positive perceptions and achieve required learning outcomes.

- Insert **Figure 2.** PUB461 unit structure in Semester 2, 2011 and Semester 2, 2012.

Methods and Methodology

During the last PUB461 lectorial of the semester, a printed survey was distributed to all attending students. The cover page explained the purpose of the survey: 'to find out about knowledge and skill development' in the unit. This information was also explained verbally to students. Students were assured their responses would be confidential and anonymous. To improve the likelihood of sound and trustworthy data, students were encouraged to be as honest and critical as possible.

The survey consisted of sixteen questions (refer to Appendix 1). It commenced with a series of questions seeking to understand students' perceptions of qualitative research at the *beginning* of the semester. It went on to ask questions which were designed to obtain students' opinions of the theoretical concepts and practical activities presented in the PUB461 lectorials, of the PUB461 unit assessment, and of students' overall learning experience. Finally, the survey asked students to provide information about their perceptions of qualitative research at the *end* of the semester.

Most questions on the survey gave students the opportunity to provide both qualitative and quantitative responses, as illustrated in Figure 3. Students were given approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

➤ Insert **Figure 3**. A sample page from the survey completed by PUB461 students.

Over a period of six weeks, the first author undertook a rigorous process of hand-coding the qualitative data obtained from the survey. The data was initially coded question-by-question to identify themes. These themes were then coded to reveal prevailing themes. Seven themes relating to undergraduate public health students' perceptions of qualitative research, and of the teaching and learning events which influence these perceptions, were identified. A process of inter-rater reliability was completed to ensure the soundness and trustworthiness of the qualitative data. The first author chose a series of thirty quotes from the qualitative survey data, with each representing one of the seven identified themes. The second author then used independent judgment to organise these quotes into the identified themes. The authors achieved a rate of 97% concordance.

Quantitative data from the surveys was analysed through a simple count and tally process, and proportions were then calculated.

One limitation of this study is students' interpretations of the term 'qualitative research'. Some students understood this to refer to the PUB461 unit rather than the research methodology itself. All responses where it was apparent students had responded using this erroneous interpretation of the term 'qualitative research' were not included in the data for analysis.

This research falls outside the scope of the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) because it is a teaching and learning quality assurance activity and does not therefore require ethical review, approval or monitoring. The project was conducted in strict accordance with the National Statement, with relevant legislation and with QUT policies.

Results

Seven themes emerged from the qualitative data. These themes correspond closely with the results obtained from the quantitative analysis. The qualitative and quantitative findings have been presented chronologically, reflecting the progression of the semester and the PUB461 unit.

Theme 1. 'I had no clue'.

Many undergraduate public health students indicated they had a very limited understanding of qualitative research at the commencement of PUB461. One student stated:

'To be honest I had no idea what qual was; I understood it was some kind of research and that was about it. I possibly could have heard the term previously but obviously did not take note.'

This student's statement also highlights students entering PUB461 limited prior exposure to qualitative research methodologies. Many students have only engaged with quantitative research, as reflected in the following response:

'I had no clue until I reviewed my course outline before the semester began. However, I thought it had something to do with quantitative research since I had done statistics. But I did not understand or know much about what it involved.'

As a result of this lack of exposure to qualitative research methodologies, some students appear to have entered PUB461 with minimal interest. For example, one student wrote:

'[I] basically had no understanding of what qualitative research was. Just that it was a unit I had to do in my course.'

Theme 2. 'I thought it was 'airy-fairy''.

Those undergraduate public health students who entered PUB461 with some understanding of qualitative research viewed it as an imprecise, and perhaps somewhat unsound, method of research. One student stated:

'I thought qual was vague ... I thought it had little validity and lacked solid evidence. I thought it was "airy-fairy".'

Another student explains:

'In one of the first lectures it was described as subjective. I struggled with the concept that something subjective could be useful, or the usefulness of something that is not generalisable.'

Students frequently reflect on the importance of experiential learning in understanding the abstract qualitative research theories introduced early in the unit. One student wrote:

'At the start I thought it was confusing and very vague. The terms did not really make sense (especially the theories). I think qualitative research is something you need to do "hands-on" to actually understand it.'

Theme 3. *'The practical activities were critically important in learning'*

As illustrated in Figure 4, the majority of undergraduate public health students ($n = 35$; 68%) indicated the practical activities in the lectorials were 'helpful' or 'very helpful' to understand the theoretical content of the unit.

- Insert **Figure 4.** Students' responses ($n = 58$) to the question about the extent the in-class practical activities assisted in understanding theoretical concepts.

One student explained:

'I liked the practical activities as they added to my understanding of the theoretical concepts and made it not as dry and boring.'

Another student added:

'[I] love the combination of theory and then activities to solidify concepts.'

A number of the qualitative responses highlighted specific unit activities which students found to be beneficial to their learning. For example:

'[I] strongly agree [with] activities – interview / focus group activity; descriptive narrative practice; coding practice. All very useful!!!'

And from another student:

'Some of the activities (eg. practicing interviewing a focus group) were very useful in helping me to understand how qualitative research and processes are done outside uni.'

This last response identifies student's experiential learning enables the effective development of professional qualitative research skills. This theme is repeated throughout students' qualitative responses.

Theme 4. *'[The assessment items] put the qualitative part into play'.*

The importance of experiential learning to qualitative research was again reflected in the question regarding undergraduate public health students' experiences of completing the PUB461 assessment. For example, one student stated:

'They put the qualitative part into play – we were required to go out and actually complete a qualitative study. This is very relevant to the subject and was an important component to fully understanding what qualitative research is.'

Another student noted:

'I really enjoyed completing the assessment items. I found them interesting and liked having control over my project. I enjoyed experiencing observation and an interview and feel it made me more confident in my qualitative writing skills.'

A third student reflected:

'I really enjoyed doing this assessment. I enjoyed being able to conduct my own research and explore something that I was really interested in and passionate about.'

As shown in Figure 5, the majority of students ($n = 36$; 62%) found the practical activities be 'somewhat relevant' or 'very relevant' to the practical skills necessary to complete the assessment items.

- Insert **Figure 5**. Students' responses ($n = 58$) to the question asking them to rate the relevance of the in-class practical activities to the unit assessment.

One student summarised:

'In the beginning, I thought it was going to be really hard to complete the assessment items without any help, but having the practical activities in class helped lower the work load and the thinking process. Once I had seen how a certain part of the assessment was done, it wasn't as hard to get started on the assessment.'

Theme 5. *'I have...gained valuable skills for my future practice.'*

As illustrated in Figure 6, a significant majority of undergraduate public health students ($n = 41$; 71%) reported having a 'positive' or 'very positive' learning experience in the PUB461 unit.

- Insert **Figure 6.** Students' responses ($n = 58$) to the question about their overall learning experience.

Students appear to evaluate their experience based on skills useful to their future professional practice. For example, one student states:

'I have thoroughly enjoyed this unit and learnt so much. The theory was always relevant and the practical side always clarified the theory. I have ... gained valuable skills for my future practice.'

A similar idea was reflected by another student:

'I think the skills learnt in this unit will be very helpful when out in the workforce.'

A third student added:

'I love the concept of thinking about our own thinking and internalising the research process. I am looking forward to practically applying qualitative research in my profession and interviewing communities to deliver targeted and effective health interventions.'

Theme 6. *'I think it [is] all about the 'WHY'.'*

Undergraduate public health students entering the PUB461 unit had a very limited understanding of qualitative research. Students exiting the unit reflected a more thorough knowledge of qualitative research methodologies. One student wrote:

'I think it [is] all about the 'WHY'. Why is this happening, why do people act that way, why do people do the things they do? It is all about getting out in the field and talking to participants, interacting with society and being reflexive.'

Another student took this concept further:

'I think qual is an in-depth way [of] looking a social construct and, as we've been told, a way to answer the 'why' questions to health problems in the community. It's not about what we can do to make people better, but asking why do people get sick. It's about [preventing] the health problems / issues before they become an issue.'

A third student reflected their understanding:

'Discovering the 'why' in the world by actually truly listening to the subjective experiences of people, their voices and opinions. Then using this to analyze where and how these views stem from to ultimately make positive changes conducive to health (well, in the case for me in public health).'

Theme 7. *'I think qual research is a valuable tool.'*

Undergraduate public health students at the commencement of the PUB461 unit viewed qualitative research as imprecise and unsound method of research. By the end of the unit, many students appreciate the inherent value of qualitative research in responding to public health problems. One student wrote:

'My perception – I think qual holds more validity than I previously thought. I was so doubtful / skeptical of qual research in the beginning.'

Another student stated:

'I definitely see the value in qual and the more research I do in other subjects, eg. women's health, the more I realise how valuable this type of research is for policy development in public health.'

In responding to this question, students compared qualitative methodologies to the quantitative ones. For example, one student stated:

'I think qual research is a valuable tool. Quant research will tell us how many, qual research will tell us why. Flip side of the coin.'

Another student reflected:

'Qual [is] crucial to understanding major public health issues. I would even say it is more important than quantitative research.'

These seven themes can be considered as a chronological trajectory, with students' learning experiences in PUB461 contributing to changes in their perceptions of qualitative research between the commencement and the conclusion of the unit. This idea is illustrated in Figure 7.

- Insert **Figure 7**. A visual representation of the trajectory of undergraduate public health students' perceptions of qualitative research.

Discussion

This research provides important information on *changes* in undergraduate public health students' perceptions of qualitative research during a semester-long introductory qualitative

research unit, and the critical factors which contribute to these changes. These findings provide new information on the chronological trajectory of public health students' perceptions of qualitative research across a semester, and the impacts of specific teaching and learning events on students' perceptions of qualitative research.

This research indicates many undergraduate public health students entered PUB461 with a very limited or negative perception of qualitative research methodologies. At the conclusion of the unit, students had an accurate understanding of the fundamental objectives and a positive view of the uses and value, of qualitative research.

This research suggests changes in students' perceptions are a result of the highly experiential nature of the unit. Opportunities for the real-world practice of qualitative research methodologies in PUB461 had three important effects on students: (1) it provided an engaging introduction to qualitative research, (2) it enabled students to recognise the real-world application and value of qualitative research and (3) it supported the development of real-world research skills relevant to students' future practice. These factors are interpreted by students as key features of a positive learning experience. They are critical contributors to the changing trajectory of students' perceptions of qualitative research across the semester.

This research suggests the development of real-world research skills is the primary criterion by which undergraduate public health students evaluate their learning experience in the unit. The activities which focus on the teaching of concepts and skills with clear real-world relevance are perceived by students to be beneficial. The focus on the development of real-world skills lessens the difficulties associated with the subjective nature of qualitative data enquiry. This also alleviates negative emotional responses associated with students' introduction to complex new concepts. The unique structuring of the PUB461 unit content in a manner which progressively guides students to the completion of their practical research project contributes to these positive outcomes. Students report this simplified the real-world application of concepts and skills taught in class.

Undergraduate public health students' limited or negative perceptions of qualitative research methodologies at the commencement of PUB461 are problematic. Students' responses indicate an initial lack of interest in learning qualitative research methodologies, which suggests the potential for early disengagement from the unit content. Cooper et al. (2012) suggest students develop perceptions of qualitative research based on prior research knowledge and experience. The negative stereotyping or marginalisation of qualitative research paradigms reduces students' opportunities to engage productively with these (Mitchell, Friesen, Friesen & Rose, 2007; Benton, Androff, Barr & Taylor, 2011). Indeed, this research demonstrates that many students only had previous exposure to quantitative research methodologies prior to commencing PUB461. Earlier positive exposure to qualitative research methodologies in the university curriculum is essential to inform students' perceptions of qualitative research and thereby improve learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Many undergraduate public health students enter introductory qualitative research units with a very limited or negative perception of qualitative research methodologies. Structuring a unit around opportunities for experiential learning supports students to develop a positive perception of qualitative research. Experiential learning allows students to recognise the uses and value of qualitative research, and enables them to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to apply qualitative research methodologies in their future practice. Students' initial negative perceptions can be addressed by incorporating positive exposure to qualitative research methodologies in the wider university curriculum, and specifically into articulating units.

Recommendations

Based upon understandings gained from this research, it is recommended undergraduate public health students receive earlier, positive exposure to qualitative research methodologies to enable them to develop positive perceptions of qualitative research. For students with limited or negative perceptions of qualitative research, the structuring of the unit to provide opportunities

Students' perceptions of qualitative research

for experiential learning and the development of real-world research skills also supports students to develop positive perceptions of qualitative research.

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Appendix 1. The Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out about knowledge and skill development in an undergraduate qualitative research unit. This information will contribute to developing and refining teaching and learning strategies to ensure students develop qualitative research knowledge and skills.

Your honesty is really very important in this questionnaire because sound, high quality data provides a solid platform for data analysis and findings. *Please be as honest as you can, even if it is brutal.* I strongly encourage you to be critical of your experience and express this in terms which you find are meaningful and comfortable.

This questionnaire might look long because there is lots of white space for you to write your answers. The time it takes to fill it out will be different for each of you but as a ballpark estimate, it should take you between 20ish minutes.

A huge thankyou, your input is very important and really valued!

A huge thankyou again!

Now, think back to the beginning of semester.

1. Can you please explain, in as much detail as possible, what you thought qualitative research was, that is, what it involved?
2. Can you also please explain, in as much detail as possible, what your perception of qualitative research was, that is, what is easy/vague?

This unit consisted of 13 face-to-face lecturials: a combination of theoretical concepts and practical activities.

3. Please **circle** how easy/difficult you think the theoretical concepts in this unit are?

1	2	3	4	5	6
very easy	easy	somewhat	somewhat	hard	very hard
			easy		hard

Throughout this unit, there is a portfolio of three interrelated assessment items.

11. Please **circle** how relevant the practical activities were to the assessment items?

1	2	3	4	5	6
very relevant	relevant	somewhat relevant	somewhat irrelevant	irrelevant	mostly irrelevant

12. Can you describe, in as much detail as possible, your experience of completing these assessment items?

To finish, some overall perceptions of your experience of this unit...

13. Please **circle** how you would describe your learning experience in this unit.

(NB: +ve means positive and -ve means negative)

1	2	3	4	5	6
very +ve	+ve	somewhat +ve	somewhat -ve	-ve	very -ve

14. In as much detail as you can, please describe your *overall* experience of this unit?

Now, think back to the beginning of semester.

15. Can you please explain, in as much detail as possible, what you now think qualitative research is?

16. Can you also please explain, in as much detail as possible, what your perception of qualitative research is now?

Lastly, a few demographic questions.....

17. Please **circle** your course code? PU40 PU46 Other: _____

18. Please **circle** which year of your degree you are in?

1st year 2nd year 3rd year 4th year

Thankyou very much!

Figure 1. Demographic information for students enrolled in PUB461 in Semester 2, 2011 and Semester 2, 2012.

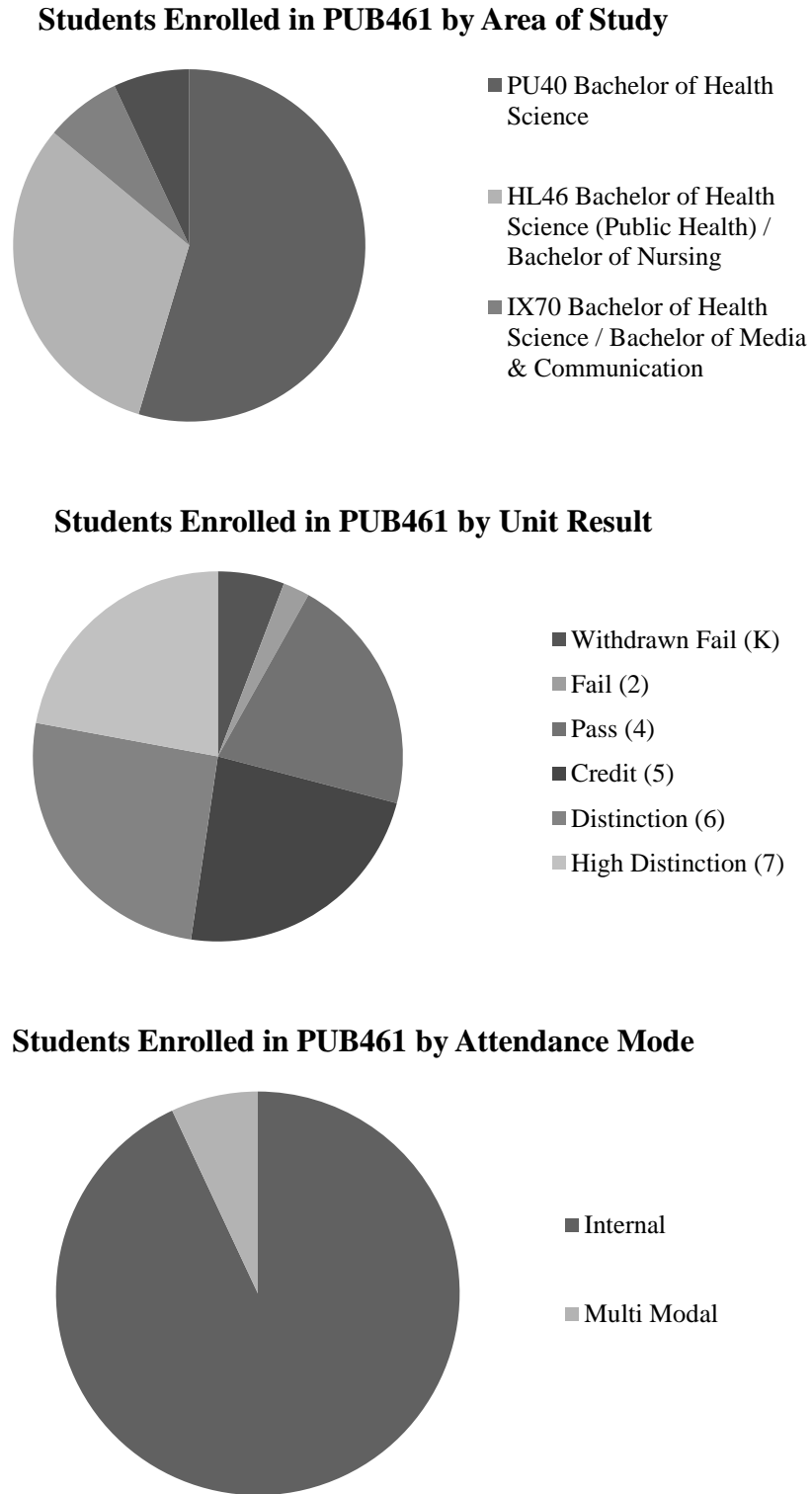


Figure 2. PUB461 unit structure in Semester 2, 2011 and Semester 2, 2012.

THEORY: Thirteen lectorials across the semester introduce students to foundational concepts in qualitative research, including research paradigms, project design, literature review, reflexive practice, interview and observation techniques, hand coding skills, ethics and soundness guidelines, and reporting.

PRACTICE: Theoretical knowledge is reinforced through related weekly in-class activities, such as mock interviews, directed observations, reflexivity and narrative exercises, and supervised data coding practice, which each focus on developing students' practical research skills.

ASSESSMENT: Throughout the semester students were required to submit a number of pieces of assessment, with each contributing to the completion of a semi-independent qualitative research project on a public health topic of the each student's choice

Semester 2, 2011	Semester 2, 2012
<p>PORTFOLIO PART A</p> <p><u>A researcher's journal</u>, which required students to comprehensively record their research process and to demonstrate reflexivity.</p>	<p>PORTFOLIO PART A</p> <p><u>A research project proposal</u>, which required students to obtain participant consent, to prepare an overview of their research rationale and planned data collection methods, and to complete a literature review.</p>
<p>PORTFOLIO PART B</p> <p><u>A research project proposal</u>, which required students to obtain participant consent, to prepare an overview of their research rationale and planned data collection methods, and to complete a literature review.</p>	<p>PORTFOLIO PART B</p> <p><u>A researcher's journal</u>, which required students to comprehensively record their research process, to demonstrate reflexivity and to discuss the data collection, analysis and interpretation process.</p>

PORTFOLIO PART C	PORTFOLIO PART
<p><u>A research report</u>, which required students to present their data collection, analysis and interpretation process and research findings.</p>	<p><u>Data presentation</u>, which required the development of a visual representation of findings and the presentation of these in a one-minute, in-class mock conference dialogue.</p>

Figure 3. A sample page from the survey completed by PUB461 students.

This unit consisted of 13 face-to-face lectures: a combination of theoretical concepts and practical activities.

3. Please **circle** how easy/difficult you think the theoretical concepts in this unit are?

1	2	3	4	5	6
very easy	easy	somewhat easy	somewhat hard	hard	very hard

4. Are the theoretical concepts delivered in a learner friendly format, that is, are they easy to follow and understand? Please **circle** your answer.

Yes No

5. Why? Please explain your answer in as much detail as you can?

Figure 4. Students' responses ($n = 58$) to the question about the extent the in-class practical activities assisted in understanding theoretical concepts.

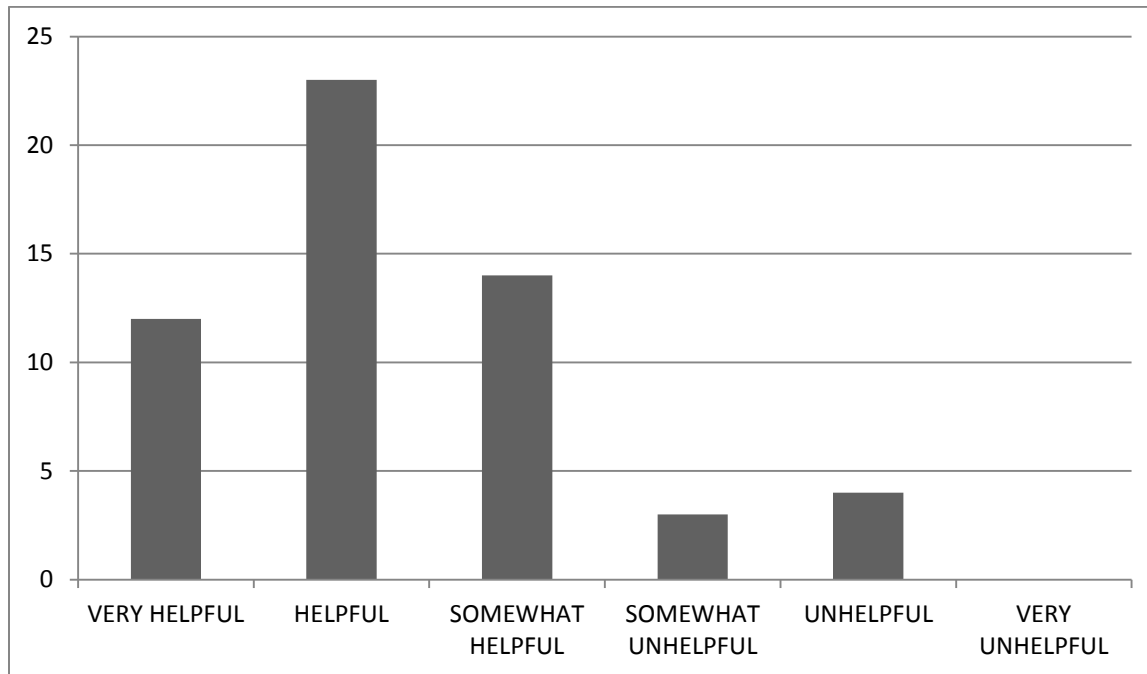


Figure 5. Students' responses ($n = 58$) to the question asking them to rate the relevance of the in-class practical activities to the unit assessment.

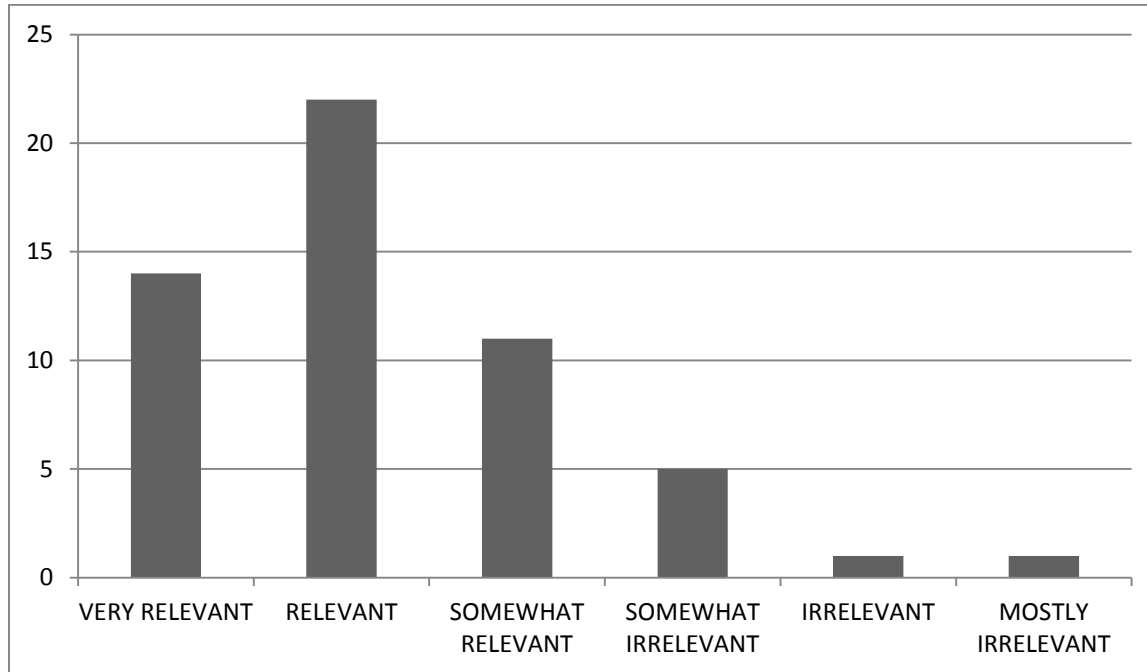


Figure 6. Students' responses ($n = 58$) to the question about their overall learning experience.

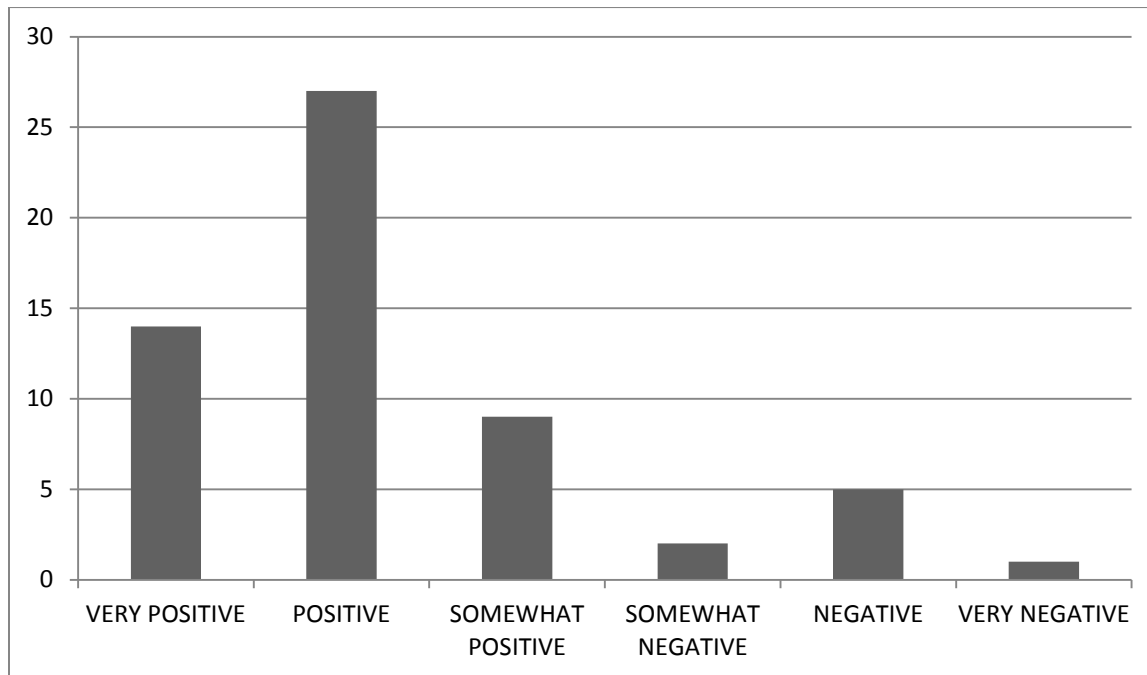


Figure 7. A visual representation of the trajectory of undergraduate public health students' perceptions of qualitative research.

