**Checklists for each stage in the research process**

There are several key points in doing your research. These concern:

* the identification of a *subject* and an *object* for the study (see especially Chapter 1), and finding your case (Chapter 6)
* the purpose of your study (Chapter 7)
* your approach (Chapter 8)
* your process (Chapter 9)
* your choice of data-gathering techniques (Chapter 10)
* your choice of analytical methods (Chapter 11)

Use the following checklists to ensure that you consider each of these key points.

**Chapter 1: Checklist for contextualising your study**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… understood the difference between the *subject* and the *object* of the case study?**  **… if you have an idea about a topic for your case study, have you thought about the six steps in the construction of a study …**   1. The subject of the study – what is the case you are actually looking at – a child, an institution, a war, a country, a political event, or what? 2. The object of the study – what is the theoretical topic at the heart of your question that the subject of your study is allowing you to explore in detail? 3. The purpose of the study – why are you doing it? Is it to make an evaluation? Is it out of curiosity, or is it with a particular understanding in mind? 4. The approach of the study – is it to test a theory that you or someone else has developed about a topic? Or is it to develop a theory from new about that topic? 5. The methods you will use to do the case study. What data collection tools might you use, and how might you analyse the data that you gather? 6. The process you will use to conduct the case study. Will it be a single or multiple study, and will you look at the case during one particular moment in time, or over a longer period? | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | See pages 14–19 of *How to Do your Case Study*. Write down the subject and the object of your case study.  You may not be able to answer all these questions of the ‘six steps’ immediately, but it’s good to be thinking about them right from the start of your study. See pages 21–24. |

**Chapter 2: Checklist for framing your research design**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… thought about the purpose of your research. In other words, what kind of thing are you trying to find out?**  **… done a literature review to help you frame your question and understand the area?**  **… drawn a storyboard to help you frame a question?**  **… decided on a prima facie question?** | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | Remember that different design frames help to answer different kinds of question. Is a case study the right design frame for the topic you are interested in? |

**Chapter 3: Checklist for seeing a complete picture**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… understood the difference between holism and reductionism?**    **… looked at different ways of conducting research from a holistic perspective?** | 🞎  🞎 | Remember that a case study is structured around different ground rules from some other kinds of research. You’re trying to see the ‘big picture’. |

**Chapter 4: Checklist for rigour and quality**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… understood issues around reliability and validity in case study research?**  **… considered the need for triangulation in a case study?**  **… understood the need to discuss your own positionality?**  **… understood issues around generalisation in case study research?**  **… thought about how to develop theory in a case study?** | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 |  |

**Chapter 5: Checklist for ethics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… considered the needs and susceptibilities of your participants, especially those who may be particularly vulnerable?**  **… if necessary, in the UK, undergone a check under the Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS)?**  **… assessed potential risks to participants?**  **… taken steps to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for your participants?**  **… ensured that data is securely stored and looked after?**  **… ensured that you have consent of your participants?**  **… provided information sheets and consent forms for participants?**  **… taken steps to ensure your own safety?**  **… obtained your institution’s clearance via its ethical review procedures?** | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | Not always necessary. Check with your supervisor. |

**Chapter 6: Checklist for selecting a *subject* …**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… thought about what kind of case will provide you with the most useful information? Will it be …**   * a *local knowledge case*, where you are intimately connected and can therefore find lots of information? * An *outlier case*, where something is revealed by virtue of the ‘differentness’ or ‘specialness’ of the case? * A *key case*: a classic or exemplary case that reveals something interesting from in-depth study? | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | To help you decide, see the flow diagram on page 110 of *How to Do your Case Study*. |

**Chapter 7: Checklist for thinking about the *object* of your study …**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Will you be …** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **1. … looking at a subject purely out of interest, to identify or illuminate a theoretical topic? This will be an *intrinsic case study.***  OR will you be  **2. … using the case study as a means to an end, better to understand some theme, process or idea? This will be an *instrumental case study.***  **Beyond this, think about whether your study will be**   * *evaluative* – where the aim is to find out how well something is working or whether it has worked as expected * *explanatory* – where the phenomenon in which you are interested needs ‘unpacking’; the connections between different parts of the issue need unraveling and the case study offers a route to explanation * *exploratory* – where little is known and the principal purpose is to establish the ‘shape’ of the problem or issue | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | It is helpful to describe your purpose in the methodology chapter of your write-up. |

**Chapter 8: Checklist for thinking about your approach**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you …** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| * **started with a firm idea or set of premises? If so, you are *testing* a theory.** * **preferred to see what ideas emerge as you immerse yourself in the situation you are studying? If so, you are *building* a theory.** * **Alternatively, you may simply be aiming to *illustrate* something.** | 🞎  🞎  🞎 | There is a major difference between theory-testing and theory-building approaches. See Chapter 8 for the discussion.  Tick one of the boxes. |

**Chapter 9: Checklist for your process**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Will your study be …** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| * **single** * **multiple** * **retrospective** * **snapshot** * **diachronic (or longitudinal)**   **IF the study is a *multiple*  one, are the multiple subjects being studied …**   * as nested units within a larger whole * as parallel units, being studied separately * as sequential elements | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | Ask yourself if your research question can be addressed by a single focus on one person or situation or whether a comparison between different cases would be better. Tick one.  Is there a time element to your question that will be addressed by looking at a sequence of events or is it better to examine one tightly defined period in time, such as a day? Tick one.  Would it be helpful to extract a number of nested elements from your main focus and examine these in detail? Tick one. |

**Chapter 10: Checklist for data-gathering techniques**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Which of these will you use …** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| * **interviews** | 🞎 | Tick as many boxes as you need to. |
| * + structured | 🞎 |
| * + unstructured | 🞎 |
| * + semi-structured | 🞎 |
| * **accounts** | 🞎 |
| * **diaries** | 🞎 |
| * **group interviews** | 🞎 |
| * **focus groups** | 🞎 |
| * **document interrogation** | 🞎 |
| * **questionnaires** | 🞎 |
| * **observation** | 🞎 |
| * + structured observation | 🞎 |
| * + unstructured observation | 🞎 |
| * + participant observation | 🞎 |
| * **image-based methods** | 🞎 |
| * **measurements and tests** | 🞎 |
| * **official statistics** | 🞎 |

**Chapter 11: Checklist for analytical methods**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Will you use ...** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| * **the constant comparative method** * **theme mapping** * **grounded theory** * **thick description** * **systems thinking** * **storyboards**   **And have you considered …**   * ways of developing theory – seeing links,   noticing patterns, abstracting ideas from your data and offering explanations   * developing narrative | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | Tick as many boxes as you need to.  See also the discussion in Chapter 11 of ways of helping you do this via tools such as NVivo. |

**Chapter 12: Checklist for writing up**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Have you …** | **✓** | **Notes** |
| **… sketched out a chapter structure for your case study write up?**  **… thought about how you will employ critical reasoning?**  **… considered how you might develop your argument?**  **… read the examples of good writing by Oliver Sacks and Jared Diamond for their use of informed questioning, reasoning and case construction?** | 🞎  🞎  🞎  🞎 | Remember that in a case study, findings, analysis and discussion chapters will usually be conflated. |