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QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FOR A CHANGING WORLD

MCAST 5TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

4th to 6th November 2026

MCAST Resource Centre - Auditorium
Main Campus, Corradino Street, Paola

ABOUT

The 5th Qualitative Research Conference, themed “Qualitative Research for a Changing World,” brings together researchers, educators, practitioners, and students to examine how qualitative inquiry can deepen understanding and address the complexities of an evolving global landscape.

Taking place on the 4th – 6th November 2026, the conference is hosted by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and provides an engaging forum for scholarly dialogue, methodological advancement, and the sharing of research that informs practice, policy, and innovation.

This year’s conference is organised around four thematic tracks:

- Transformative Practices and Creative Approaches in Qualitative Research
- Communities, Inclusion, and Social Change through Qualitative Inquiry
- Leadership, Organisations, and Human Experiences in a Changing Society
- Applied Qualitative Research Across Disciplines

Join us as we explore emerging challenges and opportunities, showcase diverse qualitative methodologies, and strengthen collaborations that contribute to meaningful change across disciplines, professions, and communities.



PROF. NICOLE BROWN

University College,
London, England

Nicole Brown is Professor of Creative and Embodied Research Practice at the UCL Institute of Education. A leading voice in embodied research, she draws on creative, arts-based methods to challenge conventional approaches to researching ableism, disability, chronic illness, and neurodivergence in higher education. Her research foregrounds lived experience and advocates for new ways of listening, speaking, and representing experience that drive cultural, institutional, and structural change.

Her publications include [Photovoice Reimagined](#), [Making the Most of Your Research Journal](#), and [Embodied Inquiry: Research Methods](#), as well as the edited books [Creativity in Education: International Perspectives](#), and [Ethical Dilemmas in Education Research: BERA Case Studies for Researchers by Researchers](#). Her next books will be the edited collections [Ethics in Practice As Research: Interdisciplinary Perspectives](#) (2027), and the [Handbook of Research Ethics in Education](#) (2027).

! KEYNOTE SPEECH

Beyond Objectivity: Embracing Reflexivity in Qualitative Research

This keynote challenges enduring notions of researcher objectivity by foregrounding reflexivity as an embodied, emotional and relational practice at the heart of qualitative inquiry. While qualitative researchers are increasingly encouraged to acknowledge positionality and subjectivity, the body itself often remains absent from reflexive work. Yet, research is always lived, sensed and felt through bodies: in moment of discomfort, resonance, tension, empathy, vulnerability and connections.

Drawing on her own embodied approaches to qualitative research, Brown explores how researchers can move beyond viewing reflexivity as a purely intellectual exercise or a performative statement appended to a research report. Instead, reflexivity is reframed as an ongoing practice of conscious noticing, attending to bodily sensations, emotional responses, assumptions, memories and relational dynamics as they emerge throughout the research process, from data collection, interpretation and analysis through to dissemination.

Brown invites participants to rethink reflexivity not as a procedural requirement, but as a vital, embodied practice that enables richer, more humane and critically engaged qualitative research.

• WORKSHOP

Photovoice Reimagined: how to make qualitative research transformative

ABSTRACT Photovoice is a particular approach to research that emerged in the 1990s in response to wider developments related to the transformative potential of qualitative research. Researchers more formally recognised the power they held in the relationship to their participants and began to feel uncomfortable about the researcher-researched hierarchy. As a result, trends moved towards participatory and creative approaches to minimise these hierarchies, to reduce the power differentials between participants and researchers, and to equalise the responsibility amongst the stakeholders within the research (e.g. Wang and Burris, 1994, 1997). In addition, smartphones, tablets, or action cameras have eased availability of and accessibility to relatively cheap and simple means for recording through photography. Where once detailed knowledge of the photographic process may have been required to enable individuals to capture meaningful information and data, editing apps and software further facilitate the development of photography. As a result, research projects employing photographs became more prominent (e.g. Blinn and Harrist, 1991; Schwartz, 1989; Niessen, 1991).

Nowadays, photovoice takes many different forms with boundaries between photovoice, photo elicitation, photo diary methods and photo documentaries often being blurred. To untangle this web, I have reframed photovoice and

elicitation as Photovoice as a framework and Photovoice as a method (Brown, 2024).

AIM

This workshop is an introductory session on how Photovoice may be used as a framework and as a method.

The aim is to help delegates understand the intricacies and practicalities of Photovoice as a framework and Photovoice as a method.

STRUCTURE

In this workshop, I offer an introductory session on how Photovoice may be used as a framework and as a method. I will begin by outlining the main principles of photovoice in its original intention and sketching out how photovoice research has developed since. We will discuss the foundations of photovoice in the context of social justice discourses, why we should be using photovoice as a framework in research, but also how we may introduce photovoice as a method in our existing paradigms.

References:

- Blinn, L., & Harist, A. W. (1991). Combining native instant photography and photo-elicitation. *Visual Anthropology*, 4(2), 175-192.
- Brown, N. (2024). *Photovoice Reimagined*. Policy Press. ISBN: 9781447369387.
- Niessen, S. A. (1991). More to it than meets the eye: Photo-elicitation amongst the Batak of Sumatra. *Visual Anthropology*, 4(3-4), 415-430.
- Schwartz, D. (1989). Visual ethnography: Using photography in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 12(2), 119-154.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1994). Empowerment through photo novella: Portraits of participation. *Health Education Quarterly*, 21(2), 171-186.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.



DR SAWSAN MALIK

Arab Open University, Kuwait

Dr Sawsan Malik is the Assistant Rector for Academic Affairs and Support at the Arab Open University (Kuwait), where she leads strategic initiatives in academic quality, curriculum innovation, and research development across the region. She holds a PhD in Business, Management, and Organisation and a Master by Research (MRes) from the University of Stirling (UK), as well as an MBA from Maastricht Business School and a Bachelor's degree in Finance from Kuwait University. Dr Malik is also an EPIC Educator certified by Babson College (USA).

Her research and teaching focus on entrepreneurship, grounded theory methodology, digital transformation, the informal economy, and smart city ecosystems, exploring how digital innovation empowers SMEs and drives sustainable economic growth aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035.

! KEYNOTE SPEECH

Using Grounded Theory to Understand Business Reality

This keynote session explores the power of Grounded Theory as a rigorous qualitative methodology for uncovering the lived realities of modern business ecosystems. While traditional quantitative methods often test existing frameworks, Grounded Theory enables researchers to build inductive, data-driven insights directly from the field. Drawing on real-world research in entrepreneurship, the session will demonstrate how Grounded Theory captures the complex, human-centric dynamics of organisational survival and digital transformation, offering a valuable approach for bridging academic theory and practical business reality.



DR SCOTT KUPFERMAN

University of Colorado, USA

Scott Kupferman, Ph.D., is a tenured Full Professor and Faculty Director of Special Education at the University of Colorado, USA. A former elementary school teacher, Dr Kupferman focuses his research on the intersection of technology and inclusive education, work that has secured more than \$8.1 million in grant funding. His global research footprint spans 42 countries, including recent projects in Botswana, Egypt, Kazakhstan, and Peru. Previously a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Tokyo in Japan, Dr Kupferman's contributions to the field have earned numerous accolades, including delegate roles at the United Nations, research fellowships with major tech companies, and recipient of the U.S. Department of Education's Commissioner's Award for Excellence.

! KEYNOTE SPEECH

AI-Informed Learning Pathways within the Vocational Higher Education Sector

Vocational education thrives on hands-on, practical experience, making the integration of AI-informed learning pathways both exciting and complex. How do we create flexible, tailored educational experiences without losing the vital human connection that vocational education requires?

This session explores that question by looking at how specific AI innovations are changing the way students learn. This includes AR simulators that give physical feedback during trade practice, data tools that spot skills gaps based on live industry needs, and computer-vision systems that monitor workplace safety. We will also examine how adaptive AI can modify instructional materials in real time to support students with disabilities, enabling AI to help drive inclusion. A practical framework for adopting these tools responsibly will be shared, which helps to map out how to protect student data privacy, avoid bias in competency tracking, and ensure digital access for all student cohorts, allowing educators to implement AI while keeping human connection at the center of vocational education programs.

KEYNOTE SPEECHES & INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

WEDNESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER:

09:30 – 10:30 – Keynote Address - Beyond Objectivity: Embracing Reflexivity in Qualitative Research (Prof. Nicole Brown)

THURSDAY 5TH NOVEMBER:

09:00 – 10:00 – Keynote Address - AI-Informed Learning Pathways within the Vocational Higher Education Sector (Dr Scott Kupferman)

15:00 – 16:30 – Workshop - Photovoice Reimagined: how to make qualitative research transformative (Prof. Nicole Brown)

FRIDAY 6TH NOVEMBER:

09:00 – 10:00 – Keynote Address - Using Grounded Theory to Understand Business Reality (Dr Sawsan Malik)

DOCTORAL DAY

FRIDAY 6TH NOVEMBER - 11:00 ONWARDS:

This event is aimed at active and prospective doctoral candidates.





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INFORMATION & CONTACT

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