Features of a good qualitative project

Key criteria for qualitative research (adapted from various sources - from Larkin, 2002) -
- Owning one's own perspective, and reflecting on subjectivity and bias
- Producing coherent connection between theory and method
- Focusing on meaning
- Accounting for, and being sensitive to, context
- Open-ended stance on data collection and analysis
- Collection of, and in-depth engagement with, 'rich' data
- Balancing description of data, with interpretation of data
- Offering transparent analysis (e.g. grounded in example)
- Offering plausible/ credible/ meaningful (to reader or others) analysis
- Offering sense of what is distinct within account of what is shared
- Drawing out 'resonant'/ accessible conclusions

Aspect	Criteria for success
Organisation	· Strong structure, appropriate sections. · Internal coherence. · Very clear, and sensible order of content · Importance and relevance of content to topic clearly and explicitly indicated. · Key points are competently and skilfully summarised. · Complexity is acknowledged and well-managed. · Conclusions are based upon plausible interpretations and arguments, and are persuasively-orientated towards the data analysis. · Data analysis is consistently grounded in example, and offers a clear sense of what is distinct, within a broader account of what is shared.
Coverage	· The title clearly and concisely identifies the important content of the dissertation. · The abstract situates the research for the naïve reader, covers all relevant points, provides a coherent and accessible précis of the project. · The introduction includes a brief, general introduction to the research area. · The introduction clearly and logically identifies a particular area of interest which merits further investigation; then provides a substantial and critical review of psychological literature relevant to this area. · Key concepts are examined critically. · Methods of data analysis are introduced clearly, with justification. · Methods are very effectively linked to either the epistemological stance of the study, or a theoretical account of the subject matter under investigation (or both). · A clear and persuasive rationale for the project, and which offers the reader an explicit sense of the author's aims, purposes and critical stance in relation to the subject matter. · An answerable research question is clearly identified. · The method of data collection *and* the process of data analysis are described in excellent detail, are illustrated by example, and are accompanied by a consistent reflexive and evaluative commentary.

	· The methodological account easily enables the reader to understand how the data were collected, organised and interpreted (i.e. no essential methodological detail is missing). · The structure of the analytic account structure is sensible, and reflects either the emphases of the research question(s), or the outcomes of the data analysis (or both). · Consistent in-depth description of, and engagement with, 'rich' data. · Very effective balance between the description and interpretation of data: the reader is offered a clear sense of what the data are *like*, but more importantly, is nearly always also offered a clear and persuasive view of what the author thinks the data might *mean.* · A highly transparent and very plausible sense of the relationship between the author's interpretative codes/ themes/ narratives/ structures/ categories (whichever are relevant) and the raw data itself. · Interpretations are consistently and persuasively illustrated by data excerpts. · Analysis is integrative and comparative, so that a coherent analytic account is produced, and is very clearly and conclusively related to the research question. · Insightful suggestions and thorough evaluation. · Conclusions well-contextualised. · Referencing is consistent, accurate and rigorous. · Very clear, concise and appropriate appendices are included.
Knowledge and Understanding	· Descriptions and explanations of all material are accurate and demonstrate depth of knowledge and understanding of topic. · Critical ability and skills are clearly demonstrated. - evident in the evaluation of research and theory, choice of methods, and interpretation of findings. · Data analysis focuses directly and consistently upon meaning. · A direct and coherent connection between theory and method is made. No factual inaccuracies or misunderstanding.
Logical Development	· Excellent arguments and explanations are developed in a clear, logical and coherent way. · Appropriate and relevant evidence is provided for the assertions made. Well-reasoned and evidence-based conclusions are drawn. · The position adopted by the author is clearly expressed; work is well-contextualise. · A plausible rationale is clearly stated, connected to literature review. · An answerable research question is clearly identified, which follows directly from the rationale. · Results and conclusions clearly relate to rationale, and research question. · Logical and insightful implications for the relevant literature are drawn from the findings.
Evaluation	· Very comprehensive evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of relevant theories, evidence etc. · Relationships between theories, epistemologies and

	sources of empirical evidence are very effectively identified, analysed and interpreted. · The author adopts a clear critical position in relation to this material - very well argued, developed and justified. · Evidence of very considerable sensitivity to context, which encompasses data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation of extant literature. · Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the author's own research. · Comprehensive account of the process of conducting the research: ethical, reflexive, theoretical, epistemological and methodological issues are all evaluated. · Resonant and accessible conclusions are drawn.
Originality	Originality, creativity and insight is expressed in more than one of the following areas: · the selection and organisation of material; · the evaluation of theories and evidence; · the development of valid arguments; · the use of data collection methods; · the use of data analysis methods; · the wider interpretation and contextualisation of the account to the world; development of the author's own perspective; · development of resonant and accessible conclusions. Novel ideas and arguments are presented.

Writing Style	· Appropriate academic style. · First person may be used imaginatively and effectively. · Ideas communicated very clearly, fluently and succinctly. · Very effective balance between description and interpretation. · Evidence and example used concisely and consistently to support arguments and interpretations. · Interpretations are plausible, persuasive, coherent. · Important content (e.g. key findings and conclusions) emphasised and relevance demonstrated. · Writer's own position represented very clearly and effectively, and always in an appropriately academic style. · Very few misused words, grammatical errors or spelling errors. · Specified word limit adhered to. · Conventions for style and layout in psychological research reports (e.g., APA, BPS) are followed. · Divisional guide on referencing is followed closely. · Very effective use of word-processing, and data analysis software where appropriate. · Sensitive, appropriate and non-discriminatory language used throughout.
Initiative and effort	· Student independently undertook the literature review. · Student took the lead role in the identification of a rationale, design, data collection and data analysis. · Student sought clarification where appropriate, demonstrated initiative and responded very constructively to advice when it was offered. · Student made good use of the supervisor's capacity as a

		'sounding board' for the project, but did not require any major substantial guidance or support at any stage.
	·	Considerable effort was put into data collection.
	·	A very detailed analysis was produced.
	·	Every effort was made to adhere to ethical principles.
Research Skills	·	Excellent library research skills.
	·	Refers to journal articles and specialist texts rather than general texts. Uses many appropriate sources not suggested by the supervisor.
	·	Logbook shows that practical work was undertaken in an organised, conscientious and methodical manner.
	·	Ethical approval was obtained for the study in advance.
	·	Excellent ethical considerations are reported.
	·	Sensitivity to context and participants in data collection procedures is evident.
	·	The assumptions underlying the use of the data analysis method are comprehensively evaluated.
	·	An excellent introduction, justification and discussion of the chosen methodology are provided.
	·	Chosen methodology is appropriate to the purpose of the research.
	·	Data collection, treatment and interpretation demonstrate competence, understanding and skill.
	·	Very clear and detailed descriptions of the development of the codes, themes and interpretations.
	·	More challenging and perhaps less obvious (i.e. previously untaught) but appropriate methodological and data analysis procedures may have been chosen.