Design Thinking for Research Problem Formulation Training Course

Professional Development Training Course Outline

Category	Research and Data Analysis	**Duration**	5 Days
Base Fee	$1,500 USD	**Delivery Mode**	Online / On-site Hybrid

Course Introduction

In today’s complex research landscape, formulating research problems around sensitive topics—such as gender identity, mental health, trauma, abuse, politics, and marginalization—requires a deliberate, ethical, and human-centered approach. Design Thinking for Research Problem Formulation Training Course qualitative inquiry to help researchers, practitioners, and scholars effectively conceptualize, frame, and manage research around sensitive and taboo subjects. By applying empathy-driven, iterative design processes, participants will gain the tools to responsibly approach difficult topics while upholding academic rigor, cultural sensitivity, and ethical integrity.

This course empowers researchers to develop problem statements that resonate with real human experiences, using tools such as empathy mapping, user personas, storytelling, and rapid prototyping. Through immersive, hands-on training, participants will learn how to identify key research challenges, collaborate with vulnerable populations, apply trauma-informed methodologies, and formulate impactful research questions that drive inclusive innovation and social transformation. The approach aligns with trending research ethics, design-led inquiry, and participatory problem framing, addressing the growing demand for safe, inclusive, and intersectional research practices in academia and fieldwork.

Programme Curriculum

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Course Objectives

1. Understand ethical research frameworks for sensitive topics
2. Apply Design Thinking principles to research problem identification
3. Explore trauma-informed research methodologies
4. Develop human-centered problem statements using empathy tools
5. Enhance skills in inclusive stakeholder engagement
6. Use user personas and empathy maps in research design
7. Identify bias and positionality in formulating questions
8. Design culturally competent and respectful research tools
9. Foster collaborative and participatory inquiry
10. Analyze power dynamics in research with vulnerable groups
11. Integrate storytelling in problem framing
12. Validate research direction using rapid prototyping
13. Create a research roadmap using iterative feedback loops

Target Audience

1. Academic Researchers
2. Social Scientists
3. Mental Health Practitioners
4. Policy Analysts
5. Non-Profit Organizations
6. UX Researchers
7. Human Rights Advocates
8. Graduate Students in Social Sciences

Course Duration: 5 days

Course Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Design Thinking for Sensitive Research

- Overview of Design Thinking methodology
- Understanding wicked problems in research
- Ethical concerns in sensitive topic research
- Stages of the Design Thinking process
- Tools for ideation and problem empathy
- **Case Study**: Using design thinking to explore adolescent mental health stigma in Kenya

Module 2: Empathy and Human-Centered Design in Research

- Conducting empathy interviews ethically
- Building empathy maps for research contexts
- Understanding the lived experiences of participants

- Using human-centered design in trauma-informed research
- Avoiding extractive and re-traumatizing methods
- **Case Study**: Researching domestic violence survivors with empathy-based design

Module 3: Ethical and Cultural Considerations

- Navigating IRB and consent in sensitive research
- Cultural intelligence and contextual appropriateness
- Researcher reflexivity and managing bias
- Working with marginalized and indigenous communities
- Ethical storytelling and data representation
- **Case Study**: Community-based research on female genital mutilation (FGM) in rural Tanzania

Module 4: Problem Framing and Question Formulation

- Converting insights into research questions
- Problem statement formulation using “How Might We”
- Validating the relevance of the problem
- Prioritizing research questions using impact mapping
- Aligning research questions with community needs
- **Case Study**: Framing questions around LGBTQ+ homelessness in urban slums

Module 5: Collaborative and Participatory Approaches

- Engaging stakeholders in co-design
- Power dynamics in research collaboration
- Design sprints with community participation
- Participatory tools for ideation
- Facilitating inclusive and safe co-creation sessions
- **Case Study**: Designing a co-created study on post-conflict trauma with youth

Module 6: Tools for Iterative Research Design

- Rapid prototyping for research instruments
- Feedback loops for refining research tools
- A/B testing for sensitivity in questioning
- Integrating storytelling into research tool design
- Adapting tools for multiple literacy levels
- **Case Study**: Iterative design of an interview guide for survivors of trafficking

Module 7: Data Sensitivity, Privacy & Security

- Digital tools for secure data collection
- Managing confidentiality in high-risk topics
- Data anonymization and participant safety
- Data ownership and rights-based approaches
- Ethics of archiving sensitive data
- **Case Study**: Handling digital data from survivors of online abuse

Module 8: Final Research Planning & Roadmap

- Synthesis of findings from Design Thinking process
- Developing a research blueprint and strategy
- Milestones for research execution
- Risk assessment and mitigation strategies
- Peer review and final reflections

- **Case Study**: Finalizing a research plan on youth radicalization prevention

Training Methodology

- Interactive lectures using real-world research case studies
- Group exercises and empathy-building simulations
- Guided problem framing using collaborative whiteboards
- Role play and design sprint practice for inclusive methods
- Peer reviews, mentoring, and iterative feedback workshops
- Prototyping and testing research question templates

Register as a group from 3 participants for a Discount

Send us an email: info@fineskilltrainingcenter.org or call *+254769199797*

Certification

Upon successful completion of this training, participants will be issued with a globally- recognized certificate.

Tailor-Made Course

We also offer tailor-made courses based on your needs.

Key Notes

a. The participant must be conversant with English.

b. Upon completion of training the participant will be issued with an Authorized Training Certificate

c. Course duration is flexible and the contents can be modified to fit any number of days.

d. The course fee includes facilitation training materials, 2 coffee breaks, buffet lunch and A Certificate upon successful completion of Training.

e. One-year post-training support Consultation and Coaching provided after the course.

f. Payment should be done at least a week before commence of the training, to Fineskill Training Center account, as indicated in the invoice so as to enable us prepare better for you.

Upcoming Scheduled Sessions

Start Date	End Date	Location	Price
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Online	$1,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$1,500
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$3,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$3,000

Start Date	End Date	Location	Price
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$6,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$4,500
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$6,000
23 Nov 2026	27 Nov 2026	Physical	$6,000

Ready to enroll or request a customized program? Book online or contact us:

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