

Interaction and activity

The RO concentrates upon three types of activity, viz.

- exploration, where students are provided with information about a topic in a way that encourages them to explore concepts and broaden their information acquisition;
- engagement, where students have the opportunity to interact with ideas, online activities and multi media resources, and
- application, where the students are encouraged to think about the concepts covered in the constellation and consider how they might apply to their own subject domains.

Maintaining interaction and interest is a major feature of the content in the RO, which attempts to maximise the potential of online materials and techniques to enable the students to learn in a flexible and accessible manner. The pictures below show examples of online exercises in the RO that assist students to

- reflect upon their own research skills
- compare positivist and phenomenological approaches to research, by thinking about the underlying principles of both world views, and
- hear sound files of example interviews.

The RO is a resource, not a course. It can be used to support online or face to face teaching or it can be studied as a stand alone resource, on the understanding that it is largely free of specific subject context, i.e. it does not attempt to support research in any particular subject domain.

The screenshot shows the 'Finding the Focus Room' page of the Research Observatory. It features a navigation menu on the left with options like 'Research skills', 'Room Map', and 'Observatory Map'. The main content area is titled 'Core research skills' and includes a self-assessment section for 'Core research skill 1: area / subject expertise'. Below this, there are four levels of expertise: Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced, and Expert, each with a brief description of the skills and knowledge required at that level. The page also includes a 'Restart' button and a 'Print this page' link.

The screenshot displays the 'The positivist and phenomenological paradigms' page. It is divided into two columns: 'The phenomenological paradigm' and 'The positivist paradigm'. Each column contains a set of questions with pull-down menus for selecting correct endings. For example, under 'Basic beliefs', users are asked to select the correct ending for 'The world is...' and 'Observer is...'. The 'Researcher should:' section asks for focus, look-at, try-to, and formulate/develop options. A 'Preferred research methods include:' section also has a pull-down menu. An 'Evaluate' button is located at the bottom of each column. The page is attributed to 'From Easterby et al (1991)'.

The screenshot shows the 'Types of interview' page. It features a navigation menu on the left and a main content area with a 'Structured interview' section. This section includes a series of interview questions and responses, such as 'Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to answer some questions about student debt and for allowing me to record it.' and 'Respondent: That's fine.' Below the questions, there are buttons for 'Structured', 'Semi-structured', and 'Unstructured' interviews. The page also includes a 'Follow this link to play the sound file if you can't view the player controls above' link and a 'Back to top' button.