

RESEARCH	SERVICE EVALUATION	CLINICAL/ NON-FINANCIAL AUDIT	USUAL PRACTICE (in public health including health protection)
The attempt to derive generalisable or transferable new knowledge to answer questions with scientifically sound methods* including studies that aim to generate hypotheses as well as studies that aim to test them, in addition to simply descriptive studies.	Designed and conducted solely to define or judge current care.	Designed and conducted to produce information to inform delivery of best care.	Designed to investigate the health issues in a population in order to improve population health Designed to investigate an outbreak or incident to help in disease control and prevention
Quantitative research – can be designed to test a hypothesis as in a randomised controlled trial or can simply be descriptive as in a postal survey. Qualitative research – can be used to generate a hypothesis, usually identifies/explores themes.	Designed to answer: “What standard does this service achieve?”	Designed to answer: “Does this service reach a predetermined standard?”	Designed to answer: “What are the health issues in this population and how do we address them?” Designed to answer: “What is the cause of this outbreak or incident and how do we manage it?”
Quantitative research - addresses clearly defined questions, aims and objectives. Qualitative research – usually has clear aims and objectives but may not establish the exact questions to be asked until research is underway.	Measures current service without reference to a standard.	Measures against a standard.	Systematic, quantitative or qualitative methods may be used.
Quantitative research – may involve evaluating or comparing interventions, particularly new ones. However, some quantitative research such as descriptive surveys, do not involve interventions. Qualitative research – seeks to understand better the perceptions and reasoning of people.	Involves an intervention in use only. The choice of treatment, care or services is that of the care professional and patient/service user according to guidance, professional standards and/or patient/ service user preference.	Involves an intervention in use only. The choice of treatment, care or services is that of the care professional and patient/service user according to guidance, professional standards and/or patient/service user preference.	Involves an intervention in use only. Any choice of intervention, treatment, care or services is based on best public health evidence or professional consensus.
Usually involves collecting data that are additional to those for routine care but may include data collected routinely. May involve treatments, samples or investigations additional to routine care. May involve data collected from interviews, focus groups and/or observation.	Usually involves analysis of existing data but may also include administration of interview(s) or questionnaire(s).	Usually involves analysis of existing data but may include administration of simple interview or questionnaire.	May involve analysis of existing routine data supplied under license/agreement or administration of interview or questionnaire to those in the population of interest. May also require evidence review.
Quantitative research – study design may involve allocating patients/service users/healthy volunteers to an intervention. Qualitative research – does not usually involve allocating participants to an intervention.	No allocation to intervention: the care professional and patient/ service user have chosen intervention before service evaluation.	No allocation to intervention: the care professional and patient/service user have chosen intervention before audit.	No allocation to intervention.
May involve randomisation.	No randomisation.	No randomisation.	May involve randomisation but not for treatment/ care/ intervention.
Normally requires REC review but not always. Refer to http://hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/ for more information.	Does not require REC review.	Does not require REC review.	Does not require REC review.