ENVG791

Research Topic in Environment and Geography 1

S2 Day 2014

Dept of Environment & Geography

Contents

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
Kevin Cheung
kevin.cheung@mq.edu.au
Contact via kevin.cheung@mq.edu.au
E7A 601

Credit points
4

Prerequisites
Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit is one of six units in the Master of Research program for the Department of Environment and Geography that will enable students in this and other areas of science to undertake advanced study of an environment and geography topic relevant to their proposed research field. The unit is developed specifically for one or more students to provide a required advanced discipline topic. Students including this unit in their MRes program must have that program approved by the academic responsible for the MRes in the department in which the student is enrolled.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions

Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics

Develop skills in basic research design

Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form

Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated

Develop skills in working with supervisors

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Initial literature review	25%	Week 6
Methodological review	25%	Week 9
Research outlines	20%	Week 13
Research presentation	20%	Week 12 and 13
Logbook of meetings	10%	Week 13

Initial literature review

Due: **Week 6**
Weighting: **25%**

In this task you are required to conduct an initial review of the literature in your field of interest and develop a problem statement based on this review. The review (1500 words) should demonstrate an understanding of contemporary research within the area you are most interested. The problem statement (up to 100 words) should form a conclusion which comprises a clear statement about the research problem, which may or may not be framed as research questions, that you wish to investigate further.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form

Methodological review

Due: **Week 9**
Weighting: **25%**

This task requires you to consider the different ways in which you could approach your problem field. You should conduct a review of the literature that explores 2-3 different methodological approaches that could be used to address your research topic. You should review the methodologies other researchers have used to explore the topic and comment on the type of data and knowledge that could be gathered under each approach. You should conclude with a brief critical assessment on which methodology you favour and why.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form

Research outlines

Due: **Week 13**
Weighting: **20%**

This task requires you to write two research outlines and critically reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. The first research outline should be your preferred approach that you would like to develop further in the second year of the MRes; the second should explore an alternative way of approaching the topic. You are encouraged to contrast different approaches in these outlines. If, for example, your preferred approach is cutting edge / contemporary you are encouraged to contrast that with a more conservative / conventional or classic way of approaching the topic (and vice versa). Each research outline should be no longer than 2 pages and should detail:

- Title of research project
- The general problem field your project is exploring and how your project relates to relevant literature
- Specific research aims and objectives
- Research approach – proposed methodology
- Proposed fieldwork locations and participants
- Feasibility (time / cost / equipment / location constraints)
- Ethical / health and safety issues

These outlines should be accompanied by a 1-2 page critical assessment which reflects on the process through which research is designed. In it you should reflect on why you favoured one project over the other; how effective you think it will be in responding to your research problem when compared to the alternative; what you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches presented; what different data and knowledge will be generated by the differing approaches; and what academic and non-academic considerations influenced you to research this topic and design your research in this way.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated

Research presentation

Due: **Week 12 and 13**
Weighting: **20%**

This task requires you to make an oral presentation which discusses your preferred research design, compares it with the alternative approach, and critically reflects on strengths and weaknesses.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated

Logbook of meetings

Due: **Week 13**
Weighting: **10%**

This task requires you to keep a logbook of meetings with your supervisor or supervisory panel. Before each meeting you should develop an agenda of issues you would like to raise with your supervisor and record them in the logbook. You should also record the outcomes of your meetings in terms of ideas discussed, issues resolved, and research tasks / directions to explore prior to the next meeting.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop skills in working with supervisors

Delivery and Resources

Unit description

The process of developing research topics and comparing approaches to address those topics is an important component of doing research. It involves translating a general research field or idea into a set of research questions and an achievable research program. This unit is designed to help you think through these early phases of research management. You will be required to refine your research interests to focus in on a particular problem or issue; compare possible methodological approaches to exploring that problem; and develop two potential research outlines. In undertaking the unit you will gain an appreciation for the less apparent processes that shape the way research is conducted and how data and knowledge is generated. It is expected, but not required, that one of the research projects identified will be developed further

to form the basis of your second year MRes research project.

The unit has three key aims:

- To introduce you to the process of working with supervisor
- To assist you in developing and refining your research ideas in preparation for the second year of the MRes
- To encourage you to critically reflect on how research projects are formed and how knowledge is generated.

Structure

The unit focuses on three important stages of research design process. The first stage focuses on the development of your research ideas into an achievable problem statement. This requires wide reading, discussions with your supervisor and personal reflection on what is important, interesting and achievable within the time frame of the MRes. The second stage compares different methodological approaches you could adopt to explore the problem statement. You are encouraged to read widely and consider how different methodologies will generate different data and provide different insights into your research problem. Finally you will develop two research strategies that explore how your research problem could be addressed. You are encouraged to develop your preferred research strategy and compare this with an alternative -– perhaps a more classic / conventional approach or perhaps something cutting edge or controversial. The final component of the unit asks you to reflect on the research design process and consider the processes that shape how research projects, and research-based knowledge, emerge.

Teaching and learning strategy

This unit requires considerable independent reading and research input from students and contrasts with the coursework-style units you may be more familiar with. In this unit you will learn how to work with a supervisor. This involves organizing regular fortnightly meetings in which you discuss your research ideas and directions followed by independent research-oriented work. Your supervisor or supervisory panel will assist you in refining your work and will direct you to particular subject areas and key readings, however the unit requires considerable self-motivation and independent research skills. In addition to the supervisory meetings will be a series of informal discussion group sessions involving staff and students oriented at upcoming assessment tasks. These will be opportunities to exchange ideas and engage in peer-to-peer learning – they will take place on Tuesdays at 3pm. At the end of semester we will have a presentation session where you can learn what your colleagues are up to and how their ideas have developed.

Technology used and required

Research Management will make use of web-based teaching support through iLearn. Students will require access to the internet and regular contact with the unit's iLearn site. To complete assignments students will need access to basic word processing programmes and some may wish to make use of powerpoint for class presentations.

Assessments

Written assessments should be submitted online. Late submissions without prior permission will be penalised at 5% per day. If you are unable to submit on time contact the unit convenor to discuss your situation. In most cases a doctor's certificate or equivalent will be required to grant an extension.

Unit Schedule

Week	Date (Wed 1pm)	Topic / task
1	6/8	No class
2	13/8	Introduction ***(NB – Wednesday 1pm in EMC-G230)***
3	20/8	Discussion on literature reviews and problem statements
4	27/8	
5	3/9	
6	10/9	Lit review due - discussion on methodological review
7	17/9	
Mid semester break		
8	8/10	
9	15/10	Methodological review due - Discussion on research outlines
10	22/10	
11	29/10	
12	5/11	Oral presentations
13	12/11	Oral presentations + research outlines + logbook

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html

Grading Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html

Grade Appeal Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module for Students
- Ask a Learning Adviser

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated
- Develop skills in working with supervisors

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated
- Develop skills in working with supervisors

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated
- Develop skills in working with supervisors

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop skills in working with supervisors

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated
- Develop skills in working with supervisors

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and

decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to review current academic debates and develop research directions
- Ability to compare and contrast different ways of approaching research topics
- Develop skills in basic research design
- Ability to communicate research ideas in oral and written form
- Develop a critical awareness of the decision-making processes that shape how research is designed and data generated