SOCX818

Evaluation and the Policy Process

S1 OUA 2017

Dept of Sociology

Contents

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
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Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit introduces students to policy evaluation and accounts for its place in the policy process and social sciences respectively. Students will acquire a knowledge of different approaches to evaluation as well as the ethical and political issues surrounding this process. The unit also focuses on how trends informing public sector management have an influence on the evaluation process and the actual implemenation of evaluations.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.open.edu.au/student-admin-and-support/key-dates/

Learning Outcomes

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

To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.

To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.

To give students the ability to (somehow confident) carry out small scale evaluations.

To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.

To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.

To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic.

To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

General Assessment Information

Assignment Submission

All written assignments are to be submitted via the turnitin links set up for each assignment on the unit iLearn page.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Key Issues + Program Logic	40%	No	Sunday of week 8
Evaluation Proposal	40%	No	Sunday of Week 13
Online Discussion	20%	No	Ongoing

Key Issues + Program Logic

Due: **Sunday of week 8**

Weighting: **40%**

This assignment includes two separate tasks: Key Issues Review (1a) AND Program Logic (1b).

Your overall mark reflects on a separate assessment of the two tasks in which the Key Issues review counts 25% and the Program Logic counts 15% of your overall mark in the unit.

1a: Key Issues Review

Word limit: 1500 words.

For the Key Issues Review task you have to write a concise review of a minimum of eight (8) readings pertaining to **one or two** of the topics listed below.

The purpose of the assessment task is to ensure that you understand the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic. You are required to demonstrate a critical understanding of the readings and the issues they raise. It is intended to be an exercise that provides you with a clear overview of the field and the issues and discussions that take place.

It is **essential to identify you own learning objectives** for this unit in this assignment and frame your review around those learning objectives.

For the review you can choose one or two of the following topics:

1. The nature of social science and what it means for evaluations
2. The role of evidence in the policy cycle/process
3. The nature of social problems and what it means for evaluators
4. The role of stakeholders in evaluations
5. Approaches in evaluations - strengths and weaknesses
6. Utilisation of evaluation research
7. Values and evaluations

If you have another wish for a topic, please consult your tutor prior to writing your assignment.

The readings can be a mix of readings provided in this unit and readings you find you find through a literature search in the library, or similar. You can choose (say) 3 readings from the list of mandatory readings as well as (say) 3 readings from the list of elective readings in addition to (say) 2 readings found through a literature search. A list of additional readings are available under week 8 on Ilearn.

The reference list is not included in the word limit.

1b: Program Logic Task

Word Limit: 750 words

The Program Logic task requires you to develop a program logic for the "Art Heart" project and to explain the logic of change that underpins it.

Program logics are one of the most widely used tools in evaluation research. This assignment is designed to allow you to develop skills associated with using this tool.

You should present the program logic in diagrammatic form in the same way as Catherine Hastings explains it in the week 7 lecture and draw on the resource "*Does your project make a difference"?* or a similar resource.

You should also describe the program logic in the text of your paper and explain the logic of change that underpins it. And, you should briefly discuss the assumptions and limitations of the program logic model presented.

The word count does not include the diagram of the program logic or the table that outlines its different elements.

Take care to include a reference list.

Additional material is provided under week 8 on Ilearn.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.
- To give students the ability to (somehow confident) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

Evaluation Proposal

Due: **Sunday of Week 13**
Weighting: **40%**

Evaluation Proposal

Due Sunday of week 13

Word Limit: 2000 words

Weight: 40%

This research assignment requires you to develop an evaluation proposal for a program.

The purpose of this assignment is to make you able to enter the field (relatively) confident that you are able to undertake at least small scale evaluations. This assignment is designed to give you those skills.

In week 9, you listen to the guest lecture with Andrew Ellery, who is the Principal Project Officer for the Department of Family and Community Services and his employee, Dale. Andrew presented one of FaCS current projects/programs, community conversations with the Pacific Islander Community.

This assignment is to write an evaluation proposal for that project.

You should organise the proposal so that it includes the elements outlined in the table below.

Note: The sections indicated with an asterix * (cover letter, research timetable, budget, personnel, appendices) normally feature in research proposals and grant applications, but due to the word limit for this task **they do not have to be included here** (and will not count toward your task). References (which are compulsory) do not count toward your word limit. Also, please make sure that you make linkages between the different sections of this report where appropriate.

Table 1: Evaluation Proposal

Cover letter*

You should include a cover letter and address the evaluation proposal

Title

The title should indicate the topic of the study in 1- 15 words

Summary

100 to 200 word summary of the entire project

Background/

Significance

This section should outline the program that you will be evaluating in the proposed research and indicate why evaluation is needed. For instance, are there controversies about the program or

the social issue it responds to? Why is there a need for further information about this program? When outlining the program, you should present the program logic in diagrammatic form and explain how the key elements of the program relate to each other. When indicating why the evaluation is needed, you should discuss the program, the social issue that it responds to and what the evaluation will contribute to our knowledge.

Literature Review

A concise summary of the main references relevant to evaluating the selected program. Make sure that you review the findings of other studies and discuss their methodology. At the end of this review, draw out the important messages for the evaluation and the methodology in particular. It is imperative that multiple sources with a range of authors are consulted to allow for a diversity of views to be explored and identification of controversies about the program (or similar types of programs). Please do not take any sources at face value – be critical but reasonable.

Aims and

Objectives

Make it clear who the evaluation is being commissioned by. Identify the study's main objective and the key research questions that will guide the evaluation. After identifying the main objective, it might help to consider whether you need information on the effectiveness, appropriateness, and efficiency and so on of the program.

Approach

Discuss the suggested approach and justify why you have chosen that approach. It is good practice to discuss (briefly) the merits of the main alternative approaches. Use references if appropriate. What methods will you use? What will be the outcome of using these methods? Which stakeholders will be involved? It is imperative that you explain the links between the evaluation question(s), the evaluation approach, the methods and how these will be operationalised in this particular case.

Ethical and

Political Issues

Identify any specific issues arising from the research. Pay careful attention also to generic

ethical issues in research with human subjects – Respect for Persons: Informed Consent; confidentiality; possible risks for subjects and any possible benefits. State whether Ethics approval has, or will be sought, and if so, from whom. Also, consider the political dimensions of this report – are there controversies about the program or social issue? Are there any conflicts of interest (i.e. as internal or external evaluators)? And, consider the ethical issues that are likely to arise because this is evaluation research.

Research

Timetable*

Set out the best information available on the time needed for the various stages of the research:

preparation, data collection, analysis, write up, publication/dissemination.

Personnel*

Where appropriate, identify the main people (including yourself as primary researcher)

are likely to be involved and summarise the experience and expertise they would need to bring in order to produce high quality data.

Budget*

This is required for many grant applications, consultancies, etc. It is often useful to complete in other cases as well.

References

List any books, articles, reports, web sites etc. you have cited in the proposal.

Appendices*

Attach any important documents (e.g. questionnaires, ethics approvals, CVs, budget, sampling framework) referred to in the body of the proposal.

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- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

Online Discussion

Due: **Ongoing**
Weighting: **20%**

Online Discussion

Weight: 20%

Marked by the end of Week 13

This assessment task is intended to encourage and reward you for actively engaging with the ideas involved in the lectures and articles.

Instead of attending weekly tutorials, as might occur with a campus based unit requiring attendance, you are required to record your ideas on the reading and lecture each week.

You participate by writing a short paragraph (or two or three, 100 - 400 words) in Word before posting it on the Online Forum (Discussion Board) under the relevant week.

Please make a separate entry for the reading and the lecture respectively.

The discussion board allows you to engage with others in debate, so please read what others

have said before making submitting your post each week.

You mark will be determined by:

- the number of your postings
- the quality of your postings, and
- the extent of your engagement with others

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.

Delivery and Resources

Course Delivery

The teaching program consists of:

- Participating in discussion forums each week. Students lead and contribute to these forums,
- Weekly recorded lectures,
- Related readings; and
- Research tasks over the course of the unit.

As this is an advanced course in the use of applied social science, it is vital for students to participate in all components of the unit. The lecture material and readings provide the conceptual basis of the course, examining the theory for each topic. The discussions are designed to complement this by providing the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss research, and develop a critical and collaborative approach.

Required Reading and Recommended Texts

Readings for each week's topics are listed on Ilearn and you are expected to have read them before contributing to discussion. Active participation is a requirement of the course.

There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be made available on Ilearn.

Policies and Procedures

Late Submission - applies unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the unit guide

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for

assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Extension Request

Special Consideration Policy and Procedure (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration)

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable

2. were beyond your control

3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work

4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit requirements

5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date.

If you feel that your studies have been impacted submit an application as follows:

1. Visit Ask MQ and use your OneID to log in

2. Fill in your relevant details

3. Attach supporting documents by clicking 'Add a reply', click 'Browse' and navigating to the files you want to attach, then click 'Submit Form' to send your notification and supporting documents

4. Please keep copies of your original documents, as they may be requested in the future as part of the assessment process

Outcome

Once your submission is assessed, an appropriate outcome will be organised.

OUA Specific Policies and Procedures
Withdrawal from a unit after the census date

You can withdraw from your subjects prior to the census date (last day to withdraw). If you successfully withdraw before the census date, you won't need to apply for Special Circumstances. If you find yourself unable to withdraw from your subjects before the census date - you might be able to apply for Special Circumstances. If you're eligible, we can refund your fees and overturn your fail grade.

If you're studying Single Subjects using FEE-HELP or paying up front, you can apply online.

If you're studying a degree using HECS-HELP, you'll need to apply directly to Macquarie University.

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_2016.html

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

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy (in effect until Dec 4th, 2017): http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy (in effect from Dec 4th, 2017): https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration

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/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

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://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

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

Graduate Capabilities

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

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.
- To give students the ability to (somehow confident) carry out small scale evaluations.

- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.

- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic.

Assessment tasks

- Key Issues + Program Logic
- Evaluation Proposal

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

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.

- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.

- To give students the ability to (somehow confident) carry out small scale evaluations.

- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.

- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.

- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

Assessment tasks

- Key Issues + Program Logic
- Evaluation Proposal

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

- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.

- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.

- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic.

Assessment task

- Key Issues + Program Logic

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

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to (somehow confident) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

Assessment tasks

- Key Issues + Program Logic
- Evaluation Proposal

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

- To give students the ability to (somehow confident) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

Assessment tasks

- Key Issues + Program Logic
- Evaluation Proposal

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

- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for your chosen topic.

Assessment tasks

- Key Issues + Program Logic
- Online Discussion