# SOCX818

## Evaluation and the Policy Process

S1 OUA 2018

*Dept of Sociology*

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# General Information

| |
|---|
| Unit convenor and teaching staff<br>Charlotte Overgaard<br>charlotte.overgaard@mq.edu.au<br><br>Adam Stebbing<br>adam.stebbing@mq.edu.au |
| Prerequisites |
| Corequisites |
| Co-badged status |
| Unit description<br>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. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see www.open.edu.au |

## 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 confidently) 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 selected topics.

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.

Quizzes must be completed online within the set time frames.

# Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Hurdle | Due |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research task | 40% | No | Sunday of week 7 |
| Evaluation Proposal | 40% | No | Sunday of week 13 |
| Online participation | 20% | No | Ongoing, marked in week 13 |

## Research task

Due: **Sunday of week 7**
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.

**2a: Key Issues Review**

Word limit: 1500 words.

For the Key Issues Review task you have to write a concise review 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.

The aim is to allow you to choose a topic that you have an interest in. It is therefore essential to identify you own learning objectives for 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. Utilisation of evaluation research

6. Values and evaluations

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

The readings can be a mix of readings provided in this unit and readings 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.

The reference list is not included in the word limit.

**2b: Program Logic Task**

Word Limit: 750 words

The Program Logic task requires you to develop a program logic for a (ONE) program or policy.

You are encouraged to choose a program or policy that you have an interest in. Please consult teaching staff to discuss suitability.

Program logic models 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 or a table and draw on suitable resources, such as “Does your project make a difference?”, or similar. You should also describe the logic in the text of your paper and how to make sense of your diagram or table. And, you should briefly discuss the assumptions and limitations of the program logic model presented.

The word count does not include diagrams or tables.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 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 selected topics.

# Evaluation Proposal

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

**Evaluation Proposal**

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

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 the skills that enables you to design an evaluation.

To allow you to develop skills that you can use in your future career, you are encouraged to choose a program or policy that you have an interest in. Please consult teaching staff to discuss suitability.

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 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. 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).

Aims and

Objectives

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 and methods

Discuss the suggested approach and justify why you have chosen that approach. 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. Use references if appropriate.

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. Use references (including those covered in the unit) if appropriate.

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.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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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 participation

Due: **Ongoing, marked in week 13**
Weighting: **20%**

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 when relevant.

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.
- 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 selected topics.

# Delivery and Resources

**Course Delivery**

The teaching program consists of:

- Short weekly lectures,
- Workshop exercises,
- Related readings; and
- Independent 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 lectures and the workshop exercises are designed to complement this by providing the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss research, and develop a critical and collaborative approach.

**Required Readings and Recommended Texts**

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

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

# Unit Schedule

| Week | Topics |
|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction to evaluation research |
| 2 | The nature of social problems, wicked problems |
| 3 | Research Paradigms |
| 4 | Engaging with the policy process |
| 5 | Evidence in policy |
| 6 | Values, Stakeholders |
| 7 | Developing program logics |
| | **BREAK** |
| 8 | Evaluation approaches |
| 9 | Evaluation approaches, continued |
| 10 | Methods |
| 11 | Methods, continued |
| 12 | Ethics and politics |

| | |
|---|---|
| 13 | Study week, no lecture or readings |

# 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 (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Grade Appeal Policy
- Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy *(**Note:** The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)*

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/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/study/getting-started/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 confidently) 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 selected topics.

### Assessment tasks

- Research task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Online participation

## 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 confidently) 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

- Research task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Online participation

## 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 selected topics.

## Assessment tasks

- Research task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Online participation

# 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 confidently) 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

- Research task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Online participation

# 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 confidently) 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 selected topics.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

## Assessment task

- 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 selected topics.

## Assessment task

- Online participation