



ENVS6202

The Living Environment

Session 1, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2025

School of Natural Sciences

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convenor

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Lecturer

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

ENVS1017 The Living Environment

Unit description

This unit is for students from a broad range of backgrounds interested in pursuing postgraduate study in environmental science, management, and conservation. Environmental concepts and topics are examined that are central to understanding the living environment – dynamic landscapes, water, air, and environmental systems that underpin life on Earth. The unit focuses on terrestrial, coastal, and atmospheric environments, and uses geographic information systems (GIS) to visualise and aid spatial analysis and interpretation. A fieldtrip in the Sydney region and practical activities on-campus allow assessments of rivers, water quality, wetlands, coasts, atmospheric processes, and anthropogenic impacts on the environment. The foundation knowledge and skills developed relating to the living environment will facilitate future studies, and are desirable for environmental careers in consultancies, government agencies, and non-government organisations.

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:

ULO1: Explain critical interactions between the land surface, water and the atmosphere that create, modify and sustain the Earth's living environment

ULO2: Demonstrate understanding of key physical environmental processes and the role of human interactions and modifications

ULO3: Apply skills in field and laboratory data collection, numeracy and analysis

ULO4: Demonstrate skills in science communication, including research, writing and critique of scientific literature

ULO5: Use spatial information science tools to visualise and analyse biophysical environments

General Assessment Information

Requirements to Pass this Unit

To pass, you must achieve a total mark equal to or greater than 50% for the unit.

We strongly encourage all students to actively participate in all learning activities in order to achieve a mark >50%. Regular engagement is crucial for your success in this unit, as these activities provide opportunities to deepen your understanding of the material, collaborate with peers, and receive valuable feedback from instructors, to assist in completing the unit assessments. Your active participation not only enhances your own learning experience but also contributes to a vibrant and dynamic learning environment for everyone.

Special Consideration

The [Special Consideration Policy](#) aims to support students who have been impacted by short-term circumstances or events that are serious, unavoidable and significantly disruptive, and which may affect their performance in assessment. You will need to provide evidence (e.g. medical certificate) to support your request for an extension for any assessment task. If you experience circumstances or events that affect your ability to complete the assessments or other activities in this unit on time, please inform the convenor and submit a Special Consideration request through the [Service Connect Portal](https://connect.mq.edu.au) (<https://connect.mq.edu.au>).

Assessment Submission Deadlines and Late Submissions

All assessments (except for the exam) must be submitted by **11.55 pm** on their due date. A 1-hour grace period will be provided to students who experience a technical concern. Should these assessment deadlines be missed due to illness or misadventure, or if you have a significant timetable clash with a major activity in another unit (e.g. a professional placement for another class), students should apply for an extension via the Special Consideration process. Note: Assessment tasks being due at the same time as those in other units **are not** grounds for an extension.

- Late submissions **will** be accepted (with penalty, unless extension granted) for the two major assignments.
- Late submissions **will not** be allowed for the final exam.

Late Assessment Submission Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark of the task) will be applied for each day a written report or presentation assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a grade of '0' will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted.

Submission of Assessments

The two major assignments must be submitted online through [Turnitin](#). Links for the submission of each assignment will be available on [iLearn](#). The final exam will be held on-campus during the formal examination period. The due dates for all assessment tasks are not negotiable. If you have commitments that will significantly impact your study during the session then you must plan for this in advance as part of an effective individual study plan.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment at Macquarie University is standards-based, as outlined in the [Assessment Policy](#). This means that your work will be assessed against clear criteria (see specific criteria for each assessment task on iLearn). ***You should understand and perform according to the general unit criteria.*** In this unit we expect quality in your assignments and a level of knowledge and comprehension of course content that sets the foundations for further study. Grades for each assessment task and the unit as a whole will be awarded according to the following general criteria (course rubric):

	Developing	Functional	Proficient	Advanced
General description of the level of attainment	Has not yet reached the desired standard. A Fail (F) grade would be awarded.	Has reached basic academic standards. A Pass (P) grade would be awarded.	Has completely reached the standards expected. A Credit (Cr) would be awarded.	Has gone beyond the expected standard. A Distinction (D) or High Distinction (HD) grade would be awarded.
Knowledge and understanding	Limited understanding of required concepts and knowledge.	Can accurately reproduce required facts, but has limited depth of understanding of basic concepts.	Exhibits breadth and depth of understanding. Uses terminology accurately in new contexts and transfers ideas to new situations.	Exhibits breadth and depth of understanding of concepts. Can engage in productive critical reflection.
Analysis	Data analysis skills are limited.	Data analysis skills are largely descriptive with limited capacity to combine multiple factors.	Can synthesise data and critique the value and importance of scientific arguments.	Data analysis is sophisticated and is capable of placing examples in context of big ideas, problems and solutions.

Information literacy	Uses immediately available information without discretion.	Can select useful information. Does not always discriminate between types of sources of information.	Independently selects useful information and can discriminate between types of sources of information.	Independently selects useful information and can critically discriminate between types of sources of information.
Communication and writing skills	Poor written communication skills (e.g. spelling and grammar). Does not demonstrate an understanding of what is expected in assignment writing and presentation.	Communicates ideas adequately in writing. Adheres to most basic requirements for written work and assignment presentation.	Communicates effectively and clearly in writing. Adheres to all expectations of assignment writing and presentation.	Communicates adeptly in writing. Adheres to all expectations of assignment writing and presentation.

Assessment Marking and Feedback

The two major assignments will be marked through Turnitin and feedback will be noted on the assignment and provided to the class in a summarised format via iLearn. Your grades will be returned using the Grades Report on iLearn. Grades from the final exam will also be made available in the Grades Report.

We aim to return your assignments with feedback within 2-3 weeks of the date that you submit your assignment. We appreciate your patience and will advise you through iLearn when your marked assignments and feedback are available for viewing.

At all stages in this unit we will try to give you constructive feedback on your understanding and performance. The unit has been structured so that practicals and assessment tasks allow us to monitor your progress and understanding throughout the unit. If at any stage you wish to receive guidance on the content of the unit or your performance then we encourage you to approach one of the staff and arrange a meeting. Likewise, if you would like more detailed feedback or explanation of the feedback you have received then please approach the staff member who gave this feedback to arrange a meeting.

We also appreciate your constructive feedback too. Our goal is to improve our teaching and your learning continuously. We ask for your feedback at the end of semester and value your specific comments. We are also happy to receive your comments throughout the semester.

Major Assignments

Full details and instructions for the two major assignments will be provided on iLearn. Plan your study time well in advance to complete and submit your assignments on time. Skills and understanding of concepts developed in the practical classes will help you with these assessment tasks. Let us know of problems you are having in advance, or as soon as possible, not after the event. Please see the information above regarding Special Consideration and penalties for late submissions of assessment tasks.

Final Exam

The exam will be scheduled in the regular University examination period. The exam will be 2 hours in length and there will be a combination of short answer and longer problem-solving questions. Further details and guidance will be provided in week 13.

Information regarding exam conditions and timetables can be found via the [Student Portal](#). It is very important to note that the final exam period includes weekdays and weekends and all students are expected to complete the exam at the time specified in the exam timetable. The timetable will be available in Draft form approximately eight weeks before the commencement of the exams and in Final form four weeks before the commencement of exams.

For unavoidable disruptions during exams, you should apply for [Special Consideration](#) as soon as possible. If a Supplementary Examination is granted as a result of the Special Consideration process, the exam time will be scheduled after the conclusion of the official examination period and you will receive an individual notification one week prior to the exam with the exact date and time of the Supplementary Examination. Note that ***it is Macquarie University policy to not set early examinations*** - all students are expected to ensure that they are available until the final day of the official examination period. You are required to download your room and seat number from the exam website before the exam.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Scientific Report	30%	No	13/04/2025
Environmental mapping and analysis	30%	No	08/06/2025
Final exam	40%	No	Formal examination period

Scientific Report

Assessment Type ¹: Report

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **13/04/2025**

Weighting: **30%**

Tests ability to conduct research, collect, analyse and interpret data, and to write a scientific report supported by appropriate literature

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain critical interactions between the land surface, water and the atmosphere that create, modify and sustain the Earth's living environment
- Demonstrate understanding of key physical environmental processes and the role of human interactions and modifications
- Apply skills in field and laboratory data collection, numeracy and analysis
- Demonstrate skills in science communication, including research, writing and critique of

scientific literature

Environmental mapping and analysis

Assessment Type ¹: Quantitative analysis task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **08/06/2025**

Weighting: **30%**

Tests the use of spatial information science to visualise biophysical environments and to interpret a real-world dataset

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain critical interactions between the land surface, water and the atmosphere that create, modify and sustain the Earth's living environment
- Demonstrate understanding of key physical environmental processes and the role of human interactions and modifications
- Apply skills in field and laboratory data collection, numeracy and analysis
- Demonstrate skills in science communication, including research, writing and critique of scientific literature
- Use spatial information science tools to visualise and analyse biophysical environments

Final exam

Assessment Type ¹: Examination

Indicative Time on Task ²: 28 hours

Due: **Formal examination period**

Weighting: **40%**

Requires problem-solving skills and discipline knowledge

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain critical interactions between the land surface, water and the atmosphere that create, modify and sustain the Earth's living environment
- Demonstrate understanding of key physical environmental processes and the role of human interactions and modifications
- Apply skills in field and laboratory data collection, numeracy and analysis

- Demonstrate skills in science communication, including research, writing and critique of scientific literature

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Classes

The class timetable can be found through the [Timetable](#) portal.

A detailed class schedule with lecture and practical topics, fieldtrip information, assessment due dates, etc. will be made available to all enrolled students through [iLearn](#).

The unit is taught via lectures, practical classes, fieldwork, readings, and assessment tasks. Students must make regular use of iLearn to access teaching and learning materials, to submit assessment tasks, to stay in touch with the unit, to contact lecturers and tutors, and to discuss issues and concepts with classmates.

Generally, you should attend:

- **Weekly lectures** (2 x 1-hour live lectures - slides provided on iLearn and recordings posted to Echo360 for revision purposes).
- **Weekly practical classes** (1 x 2-hour practical class).
- **One compulsory fieldtrip**: 4-hours at Manly Lagoon (dates and details provided on iLearn).

We also recommend that you follow current developments in the multidisciplinary fields of environmental science and management by staying abreast of the news.

Unit Organisation

This unit starts with introductory lectures and an overview of library and scientific writing skills. Following this, there are several core modules and then we conclude the unit with important unit summary lectures, including exam information and study tips.

In week 1, students need to attend two 1-hour lectures and complete one 2-hour online practical task.

A summary of what you need to do

Each week attend two 1-hour lectures and one 2-hour practical class (unless that day/week

is marked in the schedule as having 'no class'). You should devote ~10 hours per week (on average) to a 10 credit point unit such as this, which means that you should spend several hours per week working towards completion of assessments, readings, etc. for the unit outside of your online and face-to-face classes.

Recordings of lectures will be made available for revision purposes through Echo360 on iLearn. Recordings **will not** be provided for practical class activities.

The 2-hour “hands-on” practical classes will be held either in a computer laboratory, in the field (i.e. outside!), or online, as specified in the class schedule. They are designed to help you work towards the major assignments, to allow you to build on your understanding of core material from lectures, readings and other activities, and to develop some valuable generic and discipline-specific skills. Meet in your usual practical classroom every week then proceed with your tutor to the field when required, unless the class is to be held online or you are directed otherwise via iLearn. Look at the class schedule on iLearn to find out whether you need field equipment (e.g. enclosed shoes, hat/raincoat, water bottle, etc.) for your class.

In week 6 attend one 1/2 day (~4 hour) off-campus fieldtrip in the Sydney region (this mandatory fieldtrip will run rain, hail or shine). Information and an itinerary for the fieldtrip will be provided on iLearn. You will spend several hours outdoors in the field, so ensure you have sturdy, enclosed footwear (no sandals or thongs), appropriate clothing, sunscreen, a hat and a raincoat. Water, lunch and snacks for the day are your own responsibility.

Off-shore Students

Off-shore students must **email the convenor** as soon as possible to discuss study options.

Required and Recommended Texts and/or Materials

There is no set textbook for this unit, but there are recommended readings for each module as noted on iLearn and in Leganto.

Technology Used and Required

This unit will use iLearn and associated technology. See the [Instructions on how to log in to iLearn](#) and the links below which will help you:

- [Getting started](#)
- [Activities](#)
- [Assignments and grades](#)
- [Online study tips](#)
- [Discussion forums](#)
- [Lecture recordings](#)
- [Zoom Live Transcription](#)

Computer-Based Learning

There are essential computer-based components of this unit, including online lectures, some weekly practical exercises, and online discussion forums for communicating with staff and other students in this unit. You can undertake this work from off-campus or on-campus, including

through the computer labs (when they are not booked for classes) or in the Library. If you're unsure of how to connect to the internet or use the computer system, help can be obtained at: <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>.

Please note that at the beginning of each session our class lists are often incomplete (due to late transfers and changes of enrollment). In the first week of semester, if your name is missing from the enrollment list, you may not yet have access to the system. Try a couple of times, to make sure you have not made a typing error (remember your username and password are CaSe SeNsItIvE). If later in the session you suddenly find that your access to the iLearn site has been mysteriously barred, it is probably because your Student Services Fee has not been paid (this is imposed by the University Administration, not us).

General Discussion Forum and Announcements

The "General Discussion Forum" link on the unit's homepage is a communication system between you and the rest of the class (a bit like an online tutorial or bulletin board). In this unit, we use it to discuss important issues related to the unit. You are expected to read every posting to the discussion forum because important administrative and academic information will be posted there - it is your responsibility to stay up-to-date.

Unit-wide announcements will be shared through the Announcements function in iLearn under very important circumstances.

Student Workload

We recommend that you complete the full unit workload and attempt all assessment tasks. We expect you to work an average of ~10 hours per week on this unit. Obviously this is dependent on the speed at which you learn and your ability to study effectively. You may need to spend extra time on different parts of the course content. Depending on when assignments are due, this workload will be spread over the semester. It is critical that you manage your time effectively throughout the session and work around other units and commitments you may have. A guide of hours typically required to receive a Pass grade is outlined below. However, keep in mind, grades are awarded on a demonstration of understanding and ability, not on time or effort!

Activity	Hours Per Teaching Week	No. of Weeks	Hours Per Session
Lectures	2	12	24
Practicals	2	9	18
Fieldtrip	-	-	4
Assignment 1	-	-	20
Assignment 2	-	-	20
Other (independent study, reading, exam revision, etc.)	~4.3	15	64

Total for semester			150
Per week (15 weeks)			10

Unit Schedule

Please see the weekly class schedule provided on [iLearn](#).

There are lectures and a practical in week 1 (see iLearn for details).

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>). 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](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](#) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](#) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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 connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and

courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

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

The Writing Centre

[The Writing Centre](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Workshops](#)
- [Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

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.

Changes from Previous Offering

We value student feedback and aim to continually improve this unit. We encourage students to provide constructive feedback via student surveys, to the teaching staff directly, or via the FSE Student Experience & Feedback link in the iLearn page.

Student feedback from the previous offering of this unit was very positive overall, especially in terms of practical and fieldwork activities and skills developed. We took on board feedback to reduce the number of assessment items, and so this new offering does not have any module based quiz assessments.

We also developed a section on iLearn which provides guidance for assessment tasks and the fieldtrip, and provides optional quizzes for you to hone your understanding on the lecture and practical materials along the way. The results of these quizzes **do not count** towards your unit marks, but the quizzes provide a way for you to practice and study for your final exam without as much end-of-session cramming!

Unit information based on version 2025.02 of the [Handbook](#)