



PHIX2060

Bioethics and Biotechnology

Session 2, Online-flexible 2026

School of Humanities

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor, Lecturer

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Contact via Email

Please email for an appointment.

Lecturer, tutor

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Lecturer, tutor

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

PHIL2060

Unit description

This unit introduces students to a selection of the most pressing ethical questions and concerns raised by current and recent developments in the so-called 'biotech revolution', especially in the sphere of genetic technology. The first section of the unit provides an introduction to ethical reasoning, to issues of social justice and to the relationship between social values, scientific enquiry and research ethics in the context of biotechnology. The second section focuses on the ethics of gene technology in the spheres of human medicine and reproduction, including: genetic screening/testing; gene editing and therapies; genetic enhancement; and human reproductive cloning. In the third section we explore the impact of biotechnologies on other aspects of human, non-human animal and environmental welfare including: genetic engineering of plants and animals (GMOs); biofortification of food; bio-prospecting; and commercial exploitation of human genetic material. The unit is an ethics unit, not a science unit, and prior scientific knowledge is not required.

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: demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.

ULO2: analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.

ULO3: develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences

ULO4: construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.

ULO5: Express in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

General Assessment Information

Detailed assessment information and rubrics

Detailed information about each of the assessments, including rubrics and submission instructions will be available in the Assessment block in iLearn. Please make sure you read the assessment information carefully. Assessment forums for each assessment will be available on the unit iLearn – if you have an assessment question please check the assessment information

and the relevant assessment forum to see if your question has already been answered. If not, please post your question on the assessment forum where it will be answered within 1-2 days (weekdays). Please do not email your tutor unless you have tried all the above sources and cannot find an answer to your question.

Late submission

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue. This late penalty will apply to written reports and recordings only. Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs) will be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is taken very seriously, and a range of methods, including but not restricted to the use of Turnitin, are used to detect plagiarism. Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own may be grounds for referral to the Faculty Disciplinary Committee. If you have questions about how to properly cite work or how to credit sources, please ask the convenor for help and see also the Academic Integrity Policy <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/academic-integrity>

Note: All assignments in this unit are individual assignments. Collusion (unauthorised collaboration on individual assignments) is a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy. If in doubt, contact a member of teaching staff.

A helpful resource if you would like to know more about referencing and avoiding plagiarism is Macquarie's Academic Integrity Module, available here: <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/skills-development>. You will need to complete this Module before accessing the unit content, if you have not already done so. More information is available in iLearn.

GenAI/ChatGPT

In this unit, unless notified otherwise in writing by the Unit Convenor, it is expected that the work you submit demonstrates your own understanding, analysis, research, reflection, critical thinking, and writing, and you will be marked on the basis of your demonstrated understanding of and engagement with the unit content and activities. This applies to all assessments, including online forums. If your teachers have concerns about whether a submission is your own work in a meaningful sense, you may be required to attend an interview with the Unit Convenor or other academic staff to discuss your work and demonstrate your attainment of unit and task learning outcomes. Further information and advice about policies and expectations around the use of Generative AI will be given in iLearn.

Academic Writing and Study Support

Macquarie University offers a number of services to help with academic writing, referencing and study skills. For details, see: <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/skills/assignments>

For information about policies related to Assessment, see *Policies and Procedures* section below.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Essay	35%	No	27/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Forum-based blog portfolio	30%	No	01/11/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Online examination	35%	No	University Examinations Period	Individual	No	Observed

Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 40 hours

Due: **27/09/2026**

Weighting: **35%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Essay

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.
- Express in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

Forum-based blog portfolio

Assessment Type ¹: Portfolio

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **01/11/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Students complete a weekly online forum blog reflection in ilearn and submit a portfolio of 7/10 blog entries at the end of the session.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.
- Express in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

Online examination

Assessment Type ¹: Examination

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **University Examinations Period**

Weighting: **35%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Observed

Students complete an invigilated online examination during the Examinations period.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound understanding of the major ethical issues posed by specific biotechnological advances.
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant case studies and scientific contexts, as well as theories and arguments in the relevant literature.
- develop and apply skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation to past, current and future controversies in biotechnological and other sciences
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values.

- Express in written communication with improved clarity of thought, expression, and argumentation.

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
- [Academic Success](#) 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.

³ An automatic short extension is available for some assessments. Apply through the [Service Connect Portal](#).

Delivery and Resources

NOTE: It is an expectation that students will attend or listen to all lectures and complete all assessment components in this unit. You do not need to have passed each individual assessment to pass the unit, but it is expected that all assessments are attempted.

General Submission Procedure: Written assessments must be submitted via TurnItIn at the correct link provided on the Unit iLearn site. You will not be able to view your TurnItIn match similarity report for your assessment before you submit it. **You must ensure that you use the correct link for your assessment, and that you upload the correct final version of your assessment.**

DELIVERY:

Lectures in this unit will be in-person (on-campus) with recordings available online via Echo360 on the unit iLearn site.

Tutorials will be on campus.

Online-flex and PHIX students will engage in peer discussion in the weekly online forums.

READING: All required readings are available in Leganto on the unit iLearn site. Supplementary reading is required for Essays. Further suggestions for Supplementary Reading may be provided in lectures and on iLearn.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://policies.smq.edu.au) (<https://policies.smq.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) (<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) (<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/>

Academic Success

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

- [Ask a Study Coach](#)
- [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 <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk>.

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.

Unit information based on version 2026.05 of the [Handbook](#)