



ENVS6405

Australian Environmental Futures

Session 2, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2026

School of Natural Sciences

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convenor

Assoc/Prof. Kerrie Tomkins

kerrie.tomkins@mq.edu.au

Contact via iLearn

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

ENVS2467

Unit description

This interdisciplinary unit critically examines the key processes and relationships that underpin environmental protection, management and sustainability within and across urban, rural and remote areas of Australia. It focuses on three core aspects: the unique characteristics of the Australian environment and the need to manage impacts; the role of policy, planning and legislation as effective tools in environmental management; and the importance of implementing strategies that engage people as part of the solution to environmental problems. Contemporary examples, such as the management of river systems and managing bushfire regimes, are used to illustrate the complexity of environmental management. While hands-on practicals, field visits and assessment tasks support the development of technical and professional skills needed for careers in environmental science, policy, planning and management. The unit is accessible for students with degrees from a broad range of backgrounds, and develops foundational knowledge and skills relating to the environment and sustainability in order to facilitate higher level studies.

Learning in this unit enhances student understanding of global challenges identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals ([UNSDGs](#)) Sustainable Cities and Communities; Climate Action; Life on Land

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: Combine different sources of data, information and own knowledge to analyse complex environmental management issues and impacts on the environment.

ULO2: Demonstrate an understanding of the role of environmental policy, planning and legislation in Australia, and how these are used to address environmental issues and impacts.

ULO3: Use inter-disciplinary approaches and show sound judgement in decision-making with respect to environmental management and sustainability planning.

ULO4: Apply skills and knowledge to prepare materials and documents that are commonly used in environmental professions.

ULO5: Use written, verbal and digital forms of communication to present ideas and information clearly to different audiences, including government and community.

General Assessment Information

Requirements to Pass this Unit: To pass this unit you should attempt and submit all assessments, and must achieve an aggregate mark equal to or greater than 50%.

We strongly encourage all students to actively participate in all learning activities. 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.

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, and these criteria (e.g. in a rubric) will be made available when the assessment tasks are released to you on iLearn.

Referencing: Students often ask about the preferred referencing style. The University approves five styles (<https://libguides.mq.edu.au/referencing>). The default is APA 7th style (https://libguides.mq.edu.au/APA7_referencing), but any of the five are acceptable.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools: Many students have experimented with AI tools to write or re-write their text. Read this advice: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/assessmentexams/academic-integrity/ai-tools> and refer to iLearn for more information ("Using AI in this Unit" tab). Please use AI tools in a responsible manner to enhance, but not replace, your learning.

Submission of Assessments: Instructions and submission links for the assessments are provided in iLearn ("Assessments" tab). Do not submit written assessments via email. Due dates

for all assessments are shown in the unit schedule on iLearn ("Unit Information" tab). 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.

Automatic Short-Extensions: Students are able to request a short 3-day extension for Assessments 1 and 2. The short extensions are approved automatically and recorded, however, iLearn will still show the original due date for the assessment. The short-extensions do not apply to Assessment 3.

Marking of Assessments: Written assessments will be marked through Turnitin with feedback noted on the assignment. Assessment marks will be available via the Grades Report on iLearn. We aim to return your assessment grades and feedback within three weeks of the assessment due date and before the next assignment is due, although sometimes other factors can affect release dates, particularly late submissions due to short-extensions. We appreciate your patience and will advise you through iLearn when your marks and feedback are available for viewing.

Late Assessment Submission Penalty: Unless an extension has been approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark of the task) will be applied for each day a written report 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. The submission time for all uploaded assessments is 11:55 pm. A 1-hour grace period will be provided to students who experience a technical concern.

For any late submission of time-sensitive tasks, such as scheduled tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, and/or scheduled practical assessments/labs, please apply for [Special Consideration](#).

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. If you experience circumstances or events that affect your ability to complete the assessments in this unit on time, please inform the convenor and submit a Special Consideration request through <https://connect.mq.edu.au>.

Second Chance Strategy: Second chance strategies may be offered to you to ensure that you successfully complete the unit. Circumstances where this may apply are: if you fail an assessment, OR if you don't submit an assessment but remain engaged in the unit. The maximum grade for second chance attempts is 50 % and will be offered on a case-by-case basis. Students wishing to improve their mark where they have already passed the unit, will not be offered a second chance.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Environmental management question	30%	No	23/08/2026	Individual	Yes	Open

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
<u>Environmental assessment report</u>	40%	No	27/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
<u>Stakeholder debate</u>	30%	No	Week 13	Individual and Group	No	Observed

Environmental management question

Assessment Type ¹: Problem-based task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 25 hours

Due: **23/08/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

This assessment requires students to use different types of maps and additional data to answer a real-world environmental management question.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Combine different sources of data, information and own knowledge to analyse complex environmental management issues and impacts on the environment.
- Apply skills and knowledge to prepare materials and documents that are commonly used in environmental professions.
- Use written, verbal and digital forms of communication to present ideas and information clearly to different audiences, including government and community.

Environmental assessment report

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **27/09/2026**

Weighting: **40%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

This assessment requires students to conduct an environmental assessment for a local site and present the findings in a report to Council.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of environmental policy, planning and

legislation in Australia, and how these are used to address environmental issues and impacts.

- Apply skills and knowledge to prepare materials and documents that are commonly used in environmental professions.
- Use written, verbal and digital forms of communication to present ideas and information clearly to different audiences, including government and community.

Stakeholder debate

Assessment Type ¹: Presentation task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual and Group

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Observed

This assessment requires students to work in groups to prepare and present a case for their stakeholder.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Use inter-disciplinary approaches and show sound judgement in decision-making with respect to environmental management and sustainability planning.
- Apply skills and knowledge to prepare materials and documents that are commonly used in environmental professions.
- Use written, verbal and digital forms of communication to present ideas and information clearly to different audiences, including government and community.

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

Week 1 classes: Lectures for this unit commence in Week 1. The practicals for this unit will

commence in Week 2.

Methods of Communication: We will communicate with you through announcements on iLearn and possibly also your university email. General queries about the unit content can be placed on the iLearn discussion board.

If your query is of a personal nature, or if you want more privacy, please don't email us directly. Instead, post a message to the "Private Message to Unit Contacts" link (see "Communications" tab). This helps us to manage student queries and improves your response time.

Class Schedule: Students should check class availability with the Classfinder tool in [eStudent](#).

- This year, the lectures have been scheduled for 11 am -12 pm on Mondays starting in Week 1. **The lectures are online.**
- **Practical classes are held on-campus every week** starting in Week 2.
- There is also a **field trip to a site near to the MQ Campus which is scheduled in the practical times in Week 7- this is essential for Assessment 2.**

A detailed Unit Schedule with the weekly topics and assessment task due dates is available on iLearn ("Unit Information" tab).

Note: the lectures will be recorded, but the pracs are delivered face to face and will NOT be recorded.

Learning activities: The unit is comprised of 12 weeks of lectures and practical classes, including a field trip to a local site. The format of the prac classes varies and includes mapping skills, writing skills workshops, data and communication skills workshops, group work and student presentations. As a result, it is essential that you attend all of classes and the field trip.

In addition to the scheduled classes, you are also required to spend time doing your own independent reading and research with most of this time going towards completing the assessments. As a guide, you should aim to spend approximately 100 hours of your own time on the unit over the semester, in addition to the scheduled classes and field trip. This requires good planning on your part to ensure that you meet the assessment due dates.

Unit Organisation: The unit is organised into three modules:

- ***Module 1 - Australia's unique environment and the need to manage the impacts of people on the environment.*** This module examines some of the physical environmental management challenges posed by people and Australia's unique environment. For example, the impacts of bushfire management on vegetation communities, and the impacts of urban areas on streams.
- ***Module 2 - The role of policy, planning and legislation as effective tools in environmental protection and management.*** This module focuses on how policy, planning and legislation impacts on the environment through strategic planning,

development controls and day-to-day decision-making. This module will tie together your understanding of the physical environment and some of the tools that are used to prevent or manage environmental impacts in urban areas.

- **Module 3 - The importance of implementing strategies that engage people as part of the solution to environmental problems.** This module explores several themes in environmental management and decision-making including, ways of engaging people in environmental protection and management issues, identifying stakeholders, negotiation and the decision-making processes that are used to resolve environmental conflicts. This module will demonstrate the social/political challenges and complexities of environmental management

Field trip: The unit includes a field trip to a local urban creek during your practical time in Week 7. The area is highly urban, and as a result, it is an ideal place to learn about the challenges caused by urban intensification and environmental management. We will observe environmental management issues, record data, and take notes which will be used in Assessment 2.

Note: There are no costs associated with this trip. You will need to meet onsite at the start of your practical class time, but the site is within walking distance from the MQ Campus. Field trip logistics will be discussed during the first weeks of class.

Field and Lab Work, Health and Safety: To minimise the risk of WHS accidents, you must wear appropriate clothing and footwear, and bring adequate water and food for the field trip. You must also wear closed shoes if working in the lab. **Prior to the field trip, you will need to sign up to Field Friendly (via iLearn) so that you are covered by the university insurance during the trip.** This sign-up is compulsory and if you haven't signed up by the closing date, you will not be permitted to attend.

Technologies Used and Required: You will need to **bring a computer to the practicals each week.** We will use basic programs such as Word and Excel. You will also need a computer to use the university systems (e.g. iLearn, library) and complete the assessment tasks. Submissions of the assessment tasks will be through iLearn using Turnitin. Help with IT can be obtained at students.mq.edu.au/support/.

Background Reading: There is no single textbook for this course, and reading material for lectures will be provided on iLearn. Background reading can be found in the following:

- O'Riordan, T (1999) Environmental Science for Environmental Management, Taylor and Francis Ltd
- Aplin, G (2002), Australians and their Environment: An Introduction to Environmental Studies, Oxford University Press
- Huxham M and Sumner D (2000). Science and Environmental Decision Making, Pearson Education.
- Munasinghe M and Swart R (2005). Primer on Climate Change and Sustainable

Development, Cambridge University Press.

Assessment Grading Standards: Grades for the written assessment tasks and the unit as a whole will be awarded according to a general rubric shown in the table below.

Aspect	Developing	Functional	Proficient	Advanced
Grades	Has not yet reached the desired standard. A Fail grade would be given.	Has reached basic academic standards. A Pass grade would be awarded.	Has completely reached the standards expected. A Credit would be awarded.	Has gone beyond the expected standard. A grade of Distinction or High Distinction would be awarded.
Concepts	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 & Synthesis	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.
Independence	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.
Communications	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.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](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 \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](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.

Changes from Previous Offering

Changes from previous offerings: We value student feedback to be able to continually improve the way we offer our units. As such 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, with students pleased with the clarity around assessment requirements and the level of support from teaching staff. As such, no change to the delivery of the unit is planned, however we will continue to strive to improve the level of support and the level of student engagement by altering the content to ensure the relevance of teaching materials.

Assessment policy: To enable students more time to focus on learning, understanding and reflecting on the content of our unit we have revised the assessment structure as follows. There are now only three assessments: a skills assessment, report and final debate. Although no marks are associated with attendance, all activities provide you with key content designed to help you understand content and complete the assessments.

Unit information based on version 2026.02 of the **Handbook**