



LAWS5079

Refugees and Forced Migration

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

Macquarie Law School

Contents

<u>General Information</u>	2
<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	2
<u>General Assessment Information</u>	3
<u>Assessment Tasks</u>	4
<u>Delivery and Resources</u>	6
<u>Unit Schedule</u>	6
<u>Policies and Procedures</u>	7

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff Convenor Ebony Birchall Contact via via iLearn
Credit points 10
Prerequisites (80cp in LAW or LAWS units incl LAWS2000) or (130cp including LAWS1010 or LEX101)
Corequisites
Co-badged status
Unit description Refugee protection is one of the most controversial issues in Australian and international politics today. We will explore the historical and political climate in which international instruments and domestic policies were created, and the contemporary context in which they are implemented. This unit adopts an interdisciplinary approach to understand and critically engage with the legal frameworks governing the rights of refugees and other forced migrants. Students will develop a robust understanding of the international refugee law system, as well as its implementation and operation in Australia and abroad. This will involve an examination of the elements of the refugee definition in the Convention on the Status of Refugees and other relevant protections under international law, mechanisms in place for refugee status determination and appeals, and the jurisprudence that has developed internationally and in Australia relating to the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and other persons in need of protection.

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: Articulate the basic elements of the definition of a refugee in the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

ULO2: Describe and evaluate Australia's current refugee and border control policies, their compatibility with international law, and their impact on the refugee policies of other countries

ULO3: Engage in original and critical reflection on the social and political dimensions of the refugee debate

ULO4: Create policy and law reform proposals aimed at enhancing refugee protection in Australia and abroad

ULO5: Critically evaluate the strengths and shortcomings of the current international refugee protection regime

General Assessment Information

All written assessments submitted electronically must be submitted through the link provided in iLearn. This unit will utilise Turnitin plagiarism detection software. Students should carefully check that they submit the correct file for an assessment, as re-submissions will not be accepted after the due date and time, including instances where students upload an incorrect file in error.

The design, moderation and feedback of all assessments is in accordance with the Macquarie University Assessment Procedure (link provided under 'Policies and Procedures' below).

Late Submission Policy

A maximum penalty of five (5) percentage points of the total possible marks will be applied per day to late submissions, for up to a maximum of seven calendar days. Tasks that have not been submitted within the maximum number of additional late days will receive a mark of zero. This provision does not apply to exams or other assessment with a time limit of less than 24 hours.

Penalties for late submission will be applied consistently and equitably to all students enrolled in the unit. Where short-term, serious and unavoidable circumstances have affected their ability to submit an assessment task, a student must submit a formal application for Special Consideration as per the Special Consideration Policy. Students should not request an informal arrangement from their tutor, lecturer or Unit Convenor.

Where an application for Special Consideration is approved, and the outcome is an extension to the due date of a task, submissions that are received after the new due date will be subject to late penalties that are calculated from the new due date. This only applies where the outcome is an extension to the due date – see the Special Consideration Policy for a schedule of all possible outcomes.

Special Consideration

Students should submit applications for Special Consideration electronically via the Service Connect portal, along with the supporting documentation. Before submitting their applications, students should refer to the Special Consideration Policy (link provided under 'Policies and Procedures' below).

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Professional Skills	20%	No	Ongoing	Individual	No	Observed
Research Policy Brief	40%	No	09/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Viva Voce	40%	No	Exam Period	Individual	No	Observed

Professional Skills

Assessment Type ¹: Professional task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 0 hours

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Observed

Students will engage in classroom activities including mootings, presentations or demonstrations, structured discussion and problem solving, doctrinal analysis, simulated client consultations, and collaborative legal research. Through these activities students will develop skills in oral advocacy, legal analysis, critical reasoning, teamwork and team leadership, and/or strategic problem-solving. These activities are designed to strengthen students' ability to communicate legal concepts verbally and engage professionally within a supportive learning environment.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Articulate the basic elements of the definition of a refugee in the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Describe and evaluate Australia's current refugee and border control policies, their compatibility with international law, and their impact on the refugee policies of other countries
- Engage in original and critical reflection on the social and political dimensions of the refugee debate
- Critically evaluate the strengths and shortcomings of the current international refugee protection regime

Research Policy Brief

Assessment Type ¹: Professional task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **09/09/2026**

Weighting: **40%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

A policy/reform oriented task engaging with topical developments in refugee and migration law.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Articulate the basic elements of the definition of a refugee in the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Describe and evaluate Australia's current refugee and border control policies, their compatibility with international law, and their impact on the refugee policies of other countries
- Engage in original and critical reflection on the social and political dimensions of the refugee debate
- Create policy and law reform proposals aimed at enhancing refugee protection in Australia and abroad
- Critically evaluate the strengths and shortcomings of the current international refugee protection regime

Viva Voce

Assessment Type ¹: Examination

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Exam Period**

Weighting: **40%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Observed

An oral examination in which students will demonstrate their knowledge and skills learned in this unit.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Articulate the basic elements of the definition of a refugee in the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Describe and evaluate Australia's current refugee and border control policies, their compatibility with international law, and their impact on the refugee policies of other countries
- Engage in original and critical reflection on the social and political dimensions of the

refugee debate

- Create policy and law reform proposals aimed at enhancing refugee protection in Australia and abroad

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

Delivery

The delivery of this Unit combines pre-recorded lectures, a weekly 1-hour tutorial during weeks 2-13, and online learning content on iLearn.

This unit is worth 10 credit points, which equates to 150 hours of work. Therefore, students should expect to commit an average of 10 hours per week to this unit, including all scheduled and unscheduled activities and preparing and executing the assessment tasks.

Resources

There is no prescribed textbook for the unit. Links to the weekly readings can be found on the iLearn page. The readings for the international law sections are drawn predominantly from James C Hathaway and Michelle Foster, *The Law of Refugee Status* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed, 2014), which is available electronically through the MQ library website.

Students require access to a computer, internet with decent speed and a secure/reliable server. The iLearn page contains all Unit requirements and a weekly schedule for teaching, readings and tutorials. Information about all assessment tasks is also available on iLearn.

Unit Schedule

Tutorials begin in week 2. The unit has a staggered approach meaning the lecture content for week 1 is covered in tutorials in week 2.

Outline of content to be covered each week:

1: The Politics of Refugee Protection

2: Legal and Institutional Frameworks

3: The Definition of a Refugee I

4: The Definition of a Refugee II

5: Exclusion, Cessation and Protection Elsewhere

6: Complementary Protection

7: Climate Displacement

8: Refugee Status Determination Procedures

9: Deterrence: Detention, Temporary Protection and Return

10: Blocking Access to Asylum

11: Cooperation and Responsibility Sharing

12: Resettlement, Local Integration and Safe Pathways to Protection

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.

Unit information based on version 2026.03 of the [Handbook](#)