



LAWS5910

Research Methodologies in Law

Session 2, Online-scheduled-weekday 2026

Macquarie Law School

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Dr Jemimah Roberts

Contact via iLearn

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

160cp in LAWS units and a LAWS WAM of 75 or above. Applications for the Honours units are managed internally by Macquarie Law School.

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This is the first of two units that form the requirements for students wishing to graduate with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours). This is an advanced legal research unit, designed to develop the skills necessary to plan and execute their major legal research project. The unit introduces students to a variety of research methodologies including doctrinal, comparative, interdisciplinary, empirical, and critical legal studies (CLS) approaches. The unit emphasises theoretical concerns and requirements that pertain to research objectives, research design, research methods, argumentation, writing, and critique. The ethical dimensions of legal research are core topics in this unit and students will explore the roles, rights and obligations of students in their own scholarship. Students will learn to design research projects with rigorous research methodologies, to proffer good written analyses with sound argumentation, and to reflect on legal scholarship and on the law critically.

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: Identify, locate and record primary and secondary legal resources from a variety of library and online collections using appropriate research strategies and software.

ULO2: Apply principles of good written presentation and language to the processes of drafting, editing and re-drafting and referencing in accordance with the Australian Guide

to Legal Citation.

ULO3: Critically apply principles and values that underpin ethical research and academic honesty and apply them to your own research planning.

ULO4: Differentiate the different kinds of legal research questions (theoretical, doctrinal, normative, empirical, comparative etc) and the appropriate methodologies for answering them.

ULO5: Prepare a sophisticated research strategy and work-plan, and apply that to your own research project

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 online 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
<u>Thesis Introduction</u>	50%	No	07/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
<u>Thesis Writing</u>	50%	No	02/11/2026	Individual	Yes	Open

Thesis Introduction

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 32 hours

Due: **07/09/2026**

Weighting: **50%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Students will prepare an introductory chapter for their thesis that incorporates the research question, elements of their literature review and their methodology

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify, locate and record primary and secondary legal resources from a variety of library and online collections using appropriate research strategies and software.
- Apply principles of good written presentation and language to the processes of drafting, editing and re-drafting and referencing in accordance with the Australian Guide to Legal Citation.
- Critically apply principles and values that underpin ethical research and academic honesty and apply them to your own research planning.
- Differentiate the different kinds of legal research questions (theoretical, doctrinal, normative, empirical, comparative etc) and the appropriate methodologies for answering them.
- Prepare a sophisticated research strategy and work-plan, and apply that to your own research project

Thesis Writing

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 62 hours

Due: **02/11/2026**

Weighting: **50%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Building on the introductory chapter, students are expected to continue to develop their thesis and submit further thesis writing. The thesis will be completed in the unit LAWS5920.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify, locate and record primary and secondary legal resources from a variety of library and online collections using appropriate research strategies and software.
- Apply principles of good written presentation and language to the processes of drafting, editing and re-drafting and referencing in accordance with the Australian Guide to Legal Citation.
- Critically apply principles and values that underpin ethical research and academic honesty and apply them to your own research planning.
- Differentiate the different kinds of legal research questions (theoretical, doctrinal, normative, empirical, comparative etc) and the appropriate methodologies for answering them.
- Prepare a sophisticated research strategy and work-plan, and apply that to your own research project

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

This unit is delivered face-to-face and online and consists of **6 x 2 hour workshops** with **2 hours of corresponding pre-recorded lecture material for each workshop**.

Workshops for this unit run in **Weeks 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8**. The workshops are interactive and designed to equip you with the skills necessary to fulfill the requirements of the written assessments. Active participation in all workshops (**with video on for online students**) is expected and attendance at the workshops is recorded. This unit does not include a mark for class participation however, participation in class is necessary to do well in this unit.

Before each workshop students should:

- **watch** the lectures for each workshop available on ECHO and
- **read** the prescribed materials which provide information on each topic as well as a theoretical basis for the practical research activities.

During each workshop students will:

- **discuss the questions** posed for each workshop detailed on the iLearn page and
- **participate in practical activities** and apply knowledge acquired from the lecture and reading materials before class. Workshop activities are closely related to assisting student's to progress their research projects including developing the Introduction Chapter (Thesis Plan) and Thesis Writing (Focused Thesis Component).

Participation in this unit is based on acceptance into the Law Honours program and only students who have already been accepted are permitted to attend. 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

The required textbook is: *Terry Hutchinson, Research and Writing in Law* (4th ed, Lawbook Co 2018).

Students can purchase the textbook online from online resellers such as [Booktopia](#), [Amazon](#) and [Zookal](#). The Macquarie University library holds also copies.

Additional readings will be accessible through iLearn.

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. More detailed information about the assessment tasks is also available on iLearn.

Unit Schedule

Note that Lectures start in Week 1 and corresponding Workshops start in Week 2. It is expected that students will contact their supervisors in Week 1 to discuss their proposed research and approach to meeting the unit requirements and due dates.

Week	Lectures	Workshop	Assessment and Activities
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1	Module 1 Lectures • Introduction to the Honours Program and Assessments • Introduction to Legal Research • Research Integrity & Ethics	No Workshop	Research Integrity Module and Quiz (must be completed in order to access all modules) Students to arrange a discussion with their supervisors about their proposed research and how to manage student and staff workloads to meet the unit requirements and due dates.
2	Module 2 Lectures • Writing a Thesis Plan Part 1	Module 1 Workshop (2 hours) Workshop based on Module 1 lectures/readings.	
3	Module 3 Lectures • Writing a Thesis Plan Part 2 • Project Management	Module 2 Workshop (2 hours) Workshop based on Module 2 lectures/readings.	
4	Module 4 Lectures • Writing a Thesis Plan Part 3 • Research Methodologies	Module 3 Workshop (2 hours) Workshop based on Module 3 lectures/readings.	
5	Module 5 Lectures • Writing a Thesis Plan Part 4 • Legal Skills	No workshop	Discuss and submit a draft Thesis Plan to your supervisor in this week (by Friday 28 August)
6	Module 6 Lecture • Focus Thesis Component • Identifying a Focus Component	Module 4 Workshop (2 hours) Workshop based on Module 4 lectures/readings.	

7		Module 5 Workshop (2 hours) Workshop based on Module 5 lectures/readings.	Thesis Introduction (Thesis Plan) due 7 September 2026, 11:55pm
8	<i>No Lecture</i>	Module 6 Workshop (2 hours) Workshop based on Module 6 lectures/readings.	
9	<i>No Lecture</i>	<i>No Workshop</i>	Optional Consultation with Unit Convenor
10	<i>No Lecture</i>	<i>No Workshop</i>	Optional Consultation with Unit Convenor
11	<i>No Lecture</i>	<i>No Workshop</i>	Optional Consultation with Unit Convenor Discuss and submit a draft Focused Thesis Component to your supervisor in this week (by Friday 23 October)
12	<i>No Lecture</i>	<i>No Workshop</i>	Optional Consultation with Unit Convenor
13	<i>No Lecture</i>	<i>No Workshop</i>	Thesis Writing (Focused Thesis Component) due Monday 2 November 2026, 11:55pm

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

There has been a change to the assessments. Students no longer complete the 3MT assessment in the first half of the semester. They now complete the Thesis Introduction (Thesis Plan) in the first half of the semester and Thesis Writing (Focused Thesis Component) at the end of the semester.

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