# SOC 818

# Evaluation and the Policy Process

S1 Evening 2019

*Dept of Sociology*

# Contents

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# General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
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Credit points
4

Prerequisites
Admission to MPASR or MPASRMDevStud or GradCertPASR or GradDipPASR or MAppAnth
or MIntPubDip or MPPP or GradCertPP or GradDipPP or MPlan or MPPPMDevStud or MIntell
or MCTerrorism or MSecStrategicStud or MCrim or MPPPMPASR or MDevStud or
GradDipSIA or GradCertSIA or MSecStrategicStudMCrim or MSecStrategicStudMIntell or
MSecStrategicStudMCyberSec or MSecStrategicStudMCTerrorism or MIntellMCrim or
MIntellMCyberSec or MIntellMCTerrorism or MCTerrorismMCrim

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit introduces students to policy evaluation and accounts for its place in the policy
process and social sciences respectively. Students will acquire a knowledge of different
approaches to evaluation as well as the ethical and political issues surrounding this process.
The unit also focuses on how trends informing public sector management have an influence
on the evaluation process and the actual implemenation of evaluations.

## 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:

To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.

To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and
should do.

To give students the ability to (somehow confidently) carry out small scale evaluations.

To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.

To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.

To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.

To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

# General Assessment Information

**Assignment Submission**

All written assignments are to be submitted via the Turnitin links set up for each assignment on the unit iLearn page.

# Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Hurdle | Due |
|------|-----------|--------|-----|
| Take-home task | 40% | No | 18 April 2019 |
| Evaluation Proposal | 40% | No | 6 June 2019 |
| Participation | 20% | No | Ongoing |

## Take-home task

Due: **18 April 2019**
Weighting: **40%**

**Take-home task: 3 short answers and a program logic**

**Length: maximum 2000 words**

**Total Weight: 40% (each question counts 10%).**

This assignment is designed to test your knowledge of the content covered in weeks 1 to 7. The questions will be revealed two weeks prior to the due date, the 4th of April.

The first three questions will address key discussion points covered in weeks 1 to 6. The program logic task will test your knowledge of material covered in week 7.

All four questions require answers of 300 to 500 words.

In researching your answers, start with unit readings and lecture material and extend your research effort from there. Do not cite lecture slides

On successful completion you will be able to:
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.

# Evaluation Proposal

Due: **6 June 2019**
Weighting: **40%**

**Evaluation Proposal for Their Futures Matter**

**Length: maximum 2000 words**

**Total weight: 40% (Evaluation proposal: 30%. Reflection: 10%)**

The Their Futures Matter team has contacted you in your role as an evaluation consultant. Their Futures Matter has given you this brief information about the task and the background to the task:

"The Evidence, Monitoring and Evaluation team requires a motivated, high performing consultant to design evaluation and evidence-building activities of the reform. This is a rare and exciting opportunity to work across an evidence-based reform that improves outcomes to NSW's most vulnerable children and families. You will have the opportunity to work across the entire reform to develop evaluation frameworks and data collection approaches that measure client outcomes and program activity. There is tremendous opportunity to influence how NSW Government collects data to monitor and evaluate programs in this role. You will play a critical role ensuring the reform continues to build a strong evidence base to inform decisions on how to improve outcomes for NSW children and families.

More specifically, you must:

- Ensure inclusion of valid and reliable outcomes measures for collecting, analysing and reporting data
- Ensure that the methodology is robust and will contribute to the identification and improvement of client outcomes
- Enable inclusion of stakeholders, including government, non-government and academic stakeholders
- Develop an evaluation approach appropriate for use in the human services sector
- NB. Please note that the NSW government prefers experimental and quasi-experimental designs."

**Part 1: Proposal, 30% (1200 to 1500 words)**

**This research assignment requires you to develop an evaluation proposal for the NSW reform Their Futures Matter.** This assignment is designed to give you the skills that enables you to design an evaluation.

You should organise the proposal to include the elements outlined in the table.

Note: The sections indicated with an asterix * (cover letter, research timetable, budget, personnel, appendices) normally feature in research proposals and grant applications, but due to the word limit for this task they do not have to be included here (and will not count toward your

task). References (which are compulsory) do not count toward your word limit.

Please make sure that you make linkages between the different sections of this report where appropriate.

**Table 1: Evaluation Proposal**

Cover letter*

You should include a cover letter and address the evaluation proposal

Title

The title should indicate the topic of the study in 1- 15 words

Summary

100 to 200 words summary of the entire project

Background/

Significance/

Context

This section should outline the program that you will be evaluating in the proposed research and indicate why evaluation is needed. What is the context of the policy? Are there controversies about the program or the social issue it responds to? What do we already know about the policy problem? Why is there a need for further information about this program?

When indicating why the evaluation is needed, you should discuss the program, the social issue that it responds to and what the evaluation will contribute to our knowledge.

Start with the webpage and expand your knowledge from there, such as previous inquiries, reviews, research etc.

Aims and

Objectives

Identify the study's main objective and the key research questions that will guide the evaluation.

Approach and methods

Outline the approach of the evaluation. Discuss the suggested approach and justify why you have chosen that approach. What methods will you use? What will be the outcome of using this approach and these methods? Which stakeholders will be involved?

It is imperative that you explain the links between the evaluation question(s), the evaluation approach, the methods and how these will be operationalised in this particular case.

Use references when appropriate. In particular, take care to cite unit material.

Ethical and

Political Issues

Identify any specific issues arising from the research. Pay careful attention also to generic ethical issues in research with human subjects – Respect for Persons: Informed Consent; confidentiality; possible risks for subjects and any possible benefits. State whether Ethics approval has, or will be sought, and if so, from whom.

Also, consider the political dimensions of this report – are there controversies about the program or social issue? Are there any conflicts of interest (i.e. as internal or external evaluators)? And, consider the ethical issues that are likely to arise because this is evaluation research.

Use references, including those covered in the unit, if appropriate.

Research

Timetable*

Set out the best information available on the time needed for the various stages of the research: preparation, data collection, analysis, write up, publication/dissemination.

Personnel*

Where appropriate, identify the main people (including yourself as primary researcher)

are likely to be involved and summarise the experience and expertise they would need to bring in order to produce high quality data.

Budget*

This is required for many grant applications, consultancies, etc. It is often useful to complete in other cases as well.

References

List any books, articles, reports, web sites etc. you have cited in the proposal.

Appendices*

Attach any important documents (e.g. questionnaires, ethics approvals, CVs, budget, sampling framework) referred to in the body of the proposal.

**Part 2: Reflection over suggested approach in part 1, 10% (300 to 500 words)**

Compare and contrast the suggested approach in part 1 to *one* other evaluation approach. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches?

On successful completion you will be able to:
- To give students the ability to (somehow confidently) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

## Participation

Due: **Ongoing**
Weighting: **20%**

This assessment task is intended to encourage and reward you for actively engaging in the discussions and tasks set for each week. It is expected that you are prepared to engage with the lecturer and other students.

In marking this assignment, teaching staff will look for evidence that you have read the set readings, your willingness to engage in discussions and the quality of your participation. Your mark will reflect on both the quality and quantity of your engagement.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

# Delivery and Resources

**Course Delivery**

The teaching program consists of:

- Short weekly lectures,
- Workshop exercises,
- Related readings; and
- Independent research tasks over the course of the unit.

As this is an advanced course in the use of applied social science, it is vital for students to participate in all components of the unit. The lecture material and readings provide the conceptual basis of the course, examining the theory for each topic. The lectures and the workshop exercises are designed to complement this by providing the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss research, and develop a critical and collaborative approach.

**Required Readings and Recommended Texts**

Readings for each week's topics are listed on Ilearn and you are expected to have read them before class each week. Active participation is a requirement of the course.

There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be made available on Ilearn.

# Unit Schedule

| Week | Topics |
|------|--------|
| 1 | Introduction to evaluation research |
| 2 | The nature of social problems, wicked problems |
| 3 | Research Paradigms |
| 4 | Engaging with the policy process |
| 5 | Evidence in policy |
| 6 | Values, Stakeholders |
| 7 | Developing program logic models |
| | **BREAK** |
| 8 | Evaluation approaches |
| 9 | Evaluation approaches, continued |
| 10 | Methods |
| 11 | Methods |
| 12 | Ethics and politics |
| 13 | Study week, no lecture or readings (final task due) |

# Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). 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
- Grade Appeal Policy

- Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy *(**Note:** The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)*

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/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 ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

# Student Support

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

## Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module for Students
- Ask a Learning Adviser

# Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

# Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

## 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.

# Graduate Capabilities

## PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.
- To give students the ability to (somehow confidently) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.

### Assessment tasks

- Take-home task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Participation

## PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.
- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.

- To give students the ability to (somehow confidently) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

## Assessment tasks

- Evaluation Proposal
- Participation

# PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.

## Assessment tasks

- Take-home task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Participation

# PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- To give students a practical introduction to evaluation.

- To give students the ability to (somehow confidently) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a program logic model and use it.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

## Assessment tasks

- Evaluation Proposal
- Participation

# PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- To give students the ability to (somehow confidently) carry out small scale evaluations.
- To give students the practical skills to develop a research proposal.
- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.
- To give students an opportunity to apply knowledge to practical examples.

## Assessment tasks

- Take-home task
- Evaluation Proposal
- Participation

# PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- To give students the ability to critically think about claims about what research can and should do.

- To give students an understanding the key principles of and discussions relating to evaluations for selected topics.

## Assessment tasks

- Take-home task
- Participation