PHCM9148

Research Project Guidelines

FOR STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS AND EXAMINERS

Acknowledgements

The original (March 2010) version of the Major Project Guidelines was prepared by:

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An electronic copy of this publication is available at:
https://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/current-students/postgraduate-coursework/research-project

Contents

Project guidelines

Section 1

The project

Students who are enrolled in one of the following programs:

- Master of Public Health (9045)
- Master of Health Management (8901)
- Master of International Public Health (9048)
- Master of Public Health/Master of Health Management (9047)
- Master of Public Health/Master of International Public Health (9043)
- Master of International Public Health/Master of Health Management (9044)

may choose to replace one of their coursework electives with a 6 unit of credit (UoC) research project. (Students in programs or specialisations with specified electives should check that Research Project is specified as one of the permitted electives.)

A project is an in-depth study of an issue or topic in public health, health management or international health. It may be in the form of a small-scale research study, a case study, a program evaluation or a report on a field placement.

Although candidates are advised to start planning a project early in their program, it is normally undertaken after completion of core courses. Students wishing to enrol in a project must obtain permission from the director of their degree program or the convenor of their specialisation.

When planning a project, you should also consider your coursework choices. If possible, you should complete PHCM9498 Epidemiology & Statistics for Public Health in your first semester, as it provides basic skills for analysing and interpreting quantitative research. Other courses which provide specific skills for research include:

> PHCM9120 Qualitative Research Methods
>
> PHCM9132 Applied Research Methods for Public Health
>
> PHCM9517 Advanced Biostatistics and Statistical Computing
>
> PHCM9518 Advanced Epidemiology
>
> PHCM9520 Advanced Social and Behavioural Epidemiology

See SPHCM website http://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/current-students/postgraduate-coursework/course-offerings and click through to read the outlines of the courses.

These guidelines provide information on the scope of projects and what students should aim to achieve, how to plan the project, important considerations, and what examiners will be looking for.

How does a project fit into a coursework degree?

An option to undertake a project is available in each of the following MPH plans (specialisations):

- MPH in Health Economic Evaluation
- MPH in Health Promotion
- MPH in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing
- MPH in Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Control
- MPH in International Health
- MPH in Primary Health Care
- MPH in Quantitative Research Methods
- MPH in Social Research

The project provides an opportunity for a range of different types of research. For example, you could study the prevalence of a public health problem using a range of different data sources, design an intervention and evaluate it, complete a small epidemiological survey, or study client use of a health service.

For the Master of International Public Health, the project provides an opportunity to undertake an in-depth study of an issue in international or global health. The research may focus on data collected in or outside Australia provided it has relevance to international or global public health.

For the Master of Health Management, the project provides the opportunity to undertake an in-depth study of an issue in health services management. This could be (for example) a small behavioural research project on health care workers, or a study of an institutional response to an infectious disease, or a critical review of an operational, organisational or management issue.

Aims and objectives of a project

While projects vary in their aims, scope and design, they should be designed so as to allow you to demonstrate your ability to apply the principles of research at a postgraduate level. In reporting on the project, you should show that you can:

- Identify and define a significant issue relevant to the discipline of the degree

- Systematically collect relevant up-to-date information about the issue, either directly or from published studies or publicly available data

- Analyse, interpret and discuss the information in accordance with standard academic and health research practice

- Draw conclusions and make recommendations relevant to the issue that will contribute to current knowledge and practice in health

- Write and present a report in accordance with academic standards at a postgraduate level.

Benefits of doing a research project

Completing a project as part of your coursework degree is an opportunity to:

- learn to read and interpret other people's research critically by doing your own. This gives you an insight into the effects of practical difficulties and theoretical debates on published research

- develop and apply the advice you have received in methodology courses such as Epidemiology & Statistics for Public Health, Advanced Biostatistics, Advanced Social & Behavioural Epidemiology, Qualitative Research Methods, Applied Research Methods for Public Health, and Program Design & Evaluation

- submit a paper for peer-reviewed publication. (If successful, this will give a boost to your c.v.)

If you wish to go on to enrol in a research degree such as a Masters by Research or a PhD, a research project as part of your coursework will assist the committee evaluating your application in assessing whether you are ready to do independent research.

Project guidelines

Section 2

For students (and supervisors)

This section is addressed to the student or prospective student, but will also be useful for the supervisor(s).

What is a project?

A project is an in-depth research study of an issue relevant to the field in which you are studying. Research differs from coursework in that you are expected to contribute something new to academic or practical knowledge in your research area—something original that is more than the accepted knowledge that can be learnt from reading textbooks and published literature in the area.

There are many possible options for your project. These are just a few suggestions:

- Analysis of an existing data set in order to test a hypothesis or answer a research question

- A critical systematic review of a question such as the effectiveness of a policy or intervention

- An evaluation of the implementation of a program in your field, e.g. health services delivery, best practice clinical guidelines, or professional education program development

- A small research study of your own in which you collect and analyse original data. However, for a 6 UoC project it may not be feasible to collect original data because of the very limited time available to conduct and report on the project.

The project may be part of a larger funded research project.

See Appendix for a list of recent research projects done as PHCM9148.

How large is a project?

The project should involve about the same amount of work as required for a 6 UoC course, i.e. 9 hours per week for one semester, or 150 hours in total over the period of the semester (teaching weeks plus exam period). However, as research is unpredictable, it is possible that the project will take more time than a pre-planned coursework unit.

The output from the project should be one of the following:

- a report of 5000–10,000 words similar to a technical report for an organisation (government, health service, non-government or community-based organisation etc.)
- an article of about 3000–7000 words suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in the relevant field.

In your report you are expected to demonstrate your ability to:

- identify and define a significant issue relevant to either public health or health services management
- systematically collect relevant, up-to-date information about the issue
- analyse, interpret and discuss the information
- draw conclusions and make recommendations
- write a report in accordance with academic standards as required at master's degree level.

In other words, you need to demonstrate that you are familiar with research methods and able to think critically.

Some tips on choosing a project

Set yourself realistic goals

Do not attempt work that would be appropriate for a research master's thesis or a PhD! Your project may need to be much smaller and more focused than your area of interest. Narrowing down to a researchable question is a key research skill. Our academic staff and program directors are experienced and active researchers who can help you to ascertain the feasibility of a project you may propose.

Start thinking about your project early

The earlier you begin preparing for the project, the easier it is to complete it within the allotted time. If you are a full-time student, you should have identified your topic area and begun

discussion with relevant members of academic staff by halfway through your first semester. If you choose a topic early in your degree, perhaps even before you start coursework, you may be able to select useful methodological courses and complementary topic electives. You may also be able to carry out some of the preparation for your project through your coursework assignments.

Your project may require ethics committee clearance (see p. 10). This may take weeks or months before you can start collecting data.

Resources

For further information for planning your project see:

Aveyard, H. (2007). *Doing a literature review in health and social care: A practical guide*. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.

Bell. J. (2005). *Doing your research project.* 4th edition. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.

Berglund, C. A. (Ed.). (2001). *Health research*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2006). *How to research* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.

Polgar, S., & Thomas, S. A. (2013). *Introduction to research in the health sciences* (6th ed.). London: Churchill Livingstone.

Wadsworth, Y. (2011). *Do it yourself social research* (3rd ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

MyUNSW – Student Portal
https://my.unsw.edu.au/

UNSW A to Z Guide:
https://student.unsw.edu.au/guide

UNSW Online Handbook: http://www.handbook.unsw.edu.au/

The Learning Centre – On-line Study Resources:
http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au

SPHCM Student Prospectus. School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales *(updated annually):* https://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/sphcm/About_SPHCM/SPHCM_Prospectus.pdf

Choosing and working with a project supervisor

There are two main approaches to finding a supervisor: you can choose your own topic and see who is willing to supervise it, or you can choose a supervisor who you would like to work with, and ask them to suggest a topic.

Using the first approach, when you have selected a topic of interest, draft a brief proposal or 'concept sheet' outlining the problem to be addressed, project aims and suggested methodology, and send it to the program director to assist in suggesting a supervisor with expertise in your area of research. Then confirm with the nominated supervisor that they are available, if you have not already made contact.

Alternatively, you can choose a project by first selecting a supervisor who you wish to work with and asking them for topic suggestions, or inquiring whether they are interested in supervising you in one of your areas of interest.

Either way, try to find a supervisor whose work you have read or who you know is interested in the kind of approach you find congenial. For example, if you wish to do a qualitative project to understand 'hearts and minds', it is better to have a supervisor who has qualitative research expertise rather than (say) a clinical researcher who thinks in terms of physiological measures. This is true even if you both work in the same topic area, such as diabetes.

The supervisor *must* have an academic (or conjoint academic) appointment with the School of Public Health and Community Medicine. If your main supervisor is a conjoint academic or a staff member at a UNSW centre (such as the Kirby Institute), you must also have a co-supervisor who is a member of the SPHCM teaching staff.

You will not be allowed to enrol in the project without a proposal that has been approved by your supervisor(s) and the program director. An application form, which must be signed by your supervisor and the program director, must accompany your proposal.

The role of your supervisor

Your supervisor is expected to:
- help you formulate an appropriate project proposal and outline of the project report
- meet regularly with you to support your research/project work. Your supervisor would normally expect to meet with you for an average of one hour per week.
- inform you and the program director if you are not making satisfactory progress and/or require additional support
- provide ongoing assessment of your work throughout the period of supervision including advice on matters of presentation and style
- supply written comments on your submitted work when requested

- review a final draft of the project report and advise you whether it is in a suitable form for examination
- act as one of the examiners on submission of your project.

The role of a co-supervisor

- A co-supervisor may be required in cases where there is a need for special expertise in the subject matter. In such cases the co-supervisors do not need to have an academic appointment within UNSW, but they must be approved by your supervisor and the program director as having expertise in the field of your study.
- A co-supervisor may be required if your supervisor will be absent for some of the semester. This co-supervisor must be a member of SPHCM staff.
- You must not engage a co-supervisor without the approval of your main supervisor.
- The co-supervisor should maintain a sufficient level of communication with you and the supervisor to participate in the supervision or act as substitute for the supervisor whenever necessary.

Your responsibilities

You are expected to:

- schedule regular meetings (average one hour per week) with your supervisor or arrange regular contact (by phone, email or Skype) if you are away from the university.
- submit a review of the relevant literature at an early stage; this will usually form part of your final project report. If your project is itself a systematic literature review, you should establish in writing your search methods and terms, criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and analytical approach at an early stage.
- submit the final project report by the agreed deadline. It is generally a good idea to submit sections of your report as you are proceeding with your project, so that your supervisor can check your progress and that writing is progressing satisfactorily. As for a coursework elective, if for some valid reason (such as illness) you are unable to proceed with the project after the census date, you will need to apply for special consideration to withdraw without penalty, or make special arrangements with your supervisor and course director to complete the project and submit the report at a later date to be agreed upon.
- familiarise yourself with all relevant sources of information including the prospectus, *Postgraduate programs public health and health management 2015* [https://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/sphcm/About_SPHCM/SPHCM _Prospectus.pdf], and the UNSW Student Portal myUNSW (https://my.unsw.edu.au), which incorporate university rules and procedures and information for postgraduate students.
- be aware of the UNSW policy regarding student conduct and academic misconduct, set out on the myUNSW portal at https://student.unsw.edu.au/conduct.

Finalising your project proposal

Ethics committee clearance

If your project involves contact with respondents (e.g. interviewing volunteers or patients), access to data about identifiable people (e.g. hospital or medical records, survey data or transcripts of focus group discussions), or safety issues, you will need to apply for ethics committee permission from UNSW and possibly also from your institution, employer or health service. Such issues might include privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and possible adverse health or psychological risks for you or your respondents. See https://research.unsw.edu.au/recs and click through for guidelines on privacy and other issues.

Don't forget to allow time for formal committee approval processes. Check the dates for submission of applications. You may need to commence the ethics committee approval process well before the semester in which you will be enrolled in your project.

The UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) meets monthly and ethics applications need to be submitted 2–3 weeks before each meeting. Applications may need to include participant information sheets, recruitment advertisements and permission from other bodies (e.g. an organisation or clinic where you propose to approach potential respondents) as well as a detailed description of the study protocol.

UNSW also has a number of Human Research Ethics Advisory (HREA) Panels, which are able to assess low-risk projects. We strongly encourage students to consider projects that can be assessed by the HREA panels, for which ethical approval is usually faster, rather than projects that require approval at the HREC.

Your supervisor may already have ethics committee approval for the project you plan to undertake. If not, your supervisor will need to guide you through the process for obtaining approval. In any case, you need to begin discussions with your supervisor at least 2 months in advance, to ensure that you have ethics committee approval.

If you are unsure whether your project is low risk or high risk, see https://research.unsw.edu.au/do-i-submit-hrec-or-hrea-panel. Your project is unlikely to be regarded as 'no risk' and not require ethics committee approval unless it is purely a desk research project using publicly available data.

Funding

In general, you should not consider a project that requires funding to undertake. In no circumstances will the School of Public Health and Community Medicine provide students with funding to undertake a project.

If a research student does work that involves travel within Australia which is paid for either by the student or from a research grant, the supervisor must ensure that all the appropriate travel and safety policies are consulted and followed; such policies are not itemised in these guidelines.

Overseas projects

Because of time constraints and considerations re student safety, adequate supervision and research protocol quality control, it is usually not possible to do an overseas study for a 6 UoC research project. However, it may be possible to analyse data collected overseas if you have already gained access to the data and permission to use it.

Supervisors should note that if any overseas data is used for a research project, it should be completely clear that the fieldwork that produced the data is independent of UNSW. If the student travels or collects data overseas during the research project, all the appropriate travel and safety policies should be followed; such policies are not itemised in these guidelines.

Time frame

In planning your project, ensure that you have taken into account the time needed for any preparations such as community consultations and ethics committee applications.

Undertaking a research project requires a good deal of self-discipline. Many students find time just slips away from them when they have no weekly classes and no coursework deadlines to meet. Formulating a project timetable with the assistance of your supervisor, perhaps in the form of a Gantt chart, can be a real help.

Students are expected to complete their project over one semester.

The key components of a project proposal

Title	The title of your project
Proposer	Names of the investigators and institution
Problem	A description of the problem being addressed
Hypothesis	A statement of the hypothesis you are testing, or the research question you are endeavouring to answer
Background	A summary of the key relevant literature, references, or needs analysis that justifies the project
Aims	A statement of the expected outcomes of your project, and how they will help to address the problem
Objectives	An outline of the specific strategies or steps by which you intend to achieve your research aims
Methodology	A more detailed outline (sometimes called 'project protocol') of the actual research, data collection and analysis methods you will use
Ethics	An appreciation of any ethical issues raised and how they will be addressed
Time frame	A timetable or plan of the key activities or stages of your project

Structuring your project report

Your report may be in the form of:

- a report of 5000–10,000 words similar to a technical report for an organisation (government, health service, non-government or community-based organisation etc.)

- an article of about 3000–7000 words suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in the relevant field. If you choose this option you should include an appendix giving detailed analyses and/or methodological discussion which would not be necessary for a published paper but which an examiner will need to assess your work.

When you are ready to write up your project, you may find it helpful to think about structuring your report in the following way.

Title page

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Main text

- Introduction

- Literature review

- Methods

- Results

- Discussion

- Conclusion

- Recommendations

References

Appendices

If your report is in the form of a manuscript for submission to a journal, the manuscript will replace the main text section and will be presented in the form required by the journal to which the manuscript may be submitted.

Acknowledgments

You should acknowledge the assistance given to you by your supervisors, and any other person or organisation that has helped you in the planning, conduct, analysis or reporting of your project.

Abstract

This is a synopsis of your study question, aims and objectives, background literature, methods, results, key conclusions and recommendations. This should be 250–300 words long and should be very clear and easy to follow.

Introduction

In this section of your report you introduce the subject, provide the background to the topic or problem (i.e. what is already known), outline the study question (or problem or study hypothesis), and outline the aims and objectives of your study.

Literature review

This is a review of the literature on the topic or problem you are studying. It should include a review of any other studies or projects similar or relevant to yours, and perhaps a review of the literature on the method you have chosen if your project tests a new method of research or analysis.

Methods

This section includes the methodology of your research. It will cover such issues as:

- the study design
- the study population, sampling frame and numbers, sampling method
- survey design
- survey or data collection instruments
- protocol for obtaining data
- ethical issues and how they are addressed
- information letters, consent forms
- data management and analysis methods
- statistical analysis and tests.

Results

In this section you present the results of your research. This section includes such information as descriptive data dealing with your study population, response rates etc. and results of statistical analysis. Tables, figures and graphs are an excellent means of presenting this sort of information. All tables, figures and graphs, should be numbered consecutively throughout the whole report, and labelled with a clear and concise descriptive title.

Discussion

In this section you interpret your results and discuss their implications, with reference to other published research. Any limitations in your research methodology should also be referred to here. Examiners expect you to acknowledge these limitations as an integral part of your evaluation of your project.

Conclusion

This section summarises the key results and the conclusions that you can draw from these results. It also needs to reflect what your initial project aims and objectives were.

Recommendations

It is good research practice to make recommendations or to suggest directions for further research or actions as a result of your project findings.

References

This is a list of all the references and sources you used in your literature review, methodology and discussion. This includes books (monographs), journal articles, letters, abstracts, conference and symposium papers, media articles, and any form of published literature or comment. This also includes citations for computer analysis packages, online literature and sources, and any audiovisual resources you may have researched or cited. It is important that every claim of scientific fact you make is supported by a valid, relevant, accessible reference, and that every idea or argument, and every verbatim quotation or paraphrase of someone else's work, is correctly attributed to its source.

Appendices

This section may contain copies of any questionnaires or evaluation instruments used, covering letters, participant information and ethics approvals, statistical formulas or additional explanations.

Resources for writing project reports

For further reading on how to structure and present your report, refer to:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

Available from the publisher (www.apa.org/books). Worth buying, as you will use it repeatedly when preparing papers for publication. Good for MPH assignments too.

Anderson, J., & Poole, M. (1994). *Thesis and assignment writing* (2nd ed.). Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons.

Commonwealth of Australia (2002). *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*. (6th ed.). Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons Australia.

Day, R. A., & Gastel, B. (2006). *How to write and publish a scientific paper* (6th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Earlier editions by Day alone are fine; this one has additional information about presenting science to the public.

Peters, P. (2007). *The Cambridge guide to Australian English usage* (2nd ed.). Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Pam Peters was until recently Professor of Linguistics at Macquarie University and ran their graduate course for editors. She has written other useful books including one on essay-writing.

Strunk, W., White, E. B., & Kalman, M. (2005). *The elements of style*. (3rd ed.). New York: Penguin.

Originally by William Strunk and published in 1959, and generally referred to in its subsequent versions as 'Strunk and White', this very small book has been used by generations of writers and journalists. Any original or updated version is fine.

www.apastyle.org
The American Psychological Association publishes the *Publication manual* cited above.

www.bmj.com
The *British Medical Journal*, which now calls itself just *BMJ*, is a large well-edited general medical journal that (mostly!) follows its own advice on how to write simply and clearly. Read it often to keep up to date on health news and learn good style painlessly while you're doing so. For the journal's advice to authors, see http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-authors/house-style.

www.equator-network.org
The EQUATOR Network provides freely available resources to improve the quality of scientific papers. Many journals already make use of these resources and link to the EQUATOR website in their instructions to authors.

www.equator-network.org/library
The internet-based Library of Health Research Reporting, which is regularly updated, includes the following resources:

> Reporting guidelines
> Guidance on scientific writing
> Guidance developed by editorial groups
> Research ethics, publication ethics and good practice guidelines
> Examples of editorials introducing reporting guidelines
> Examples of good research reporting
> Examples of guidelines for peer reviewers
> Useful and interesting presentations

www.icmje.org
The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors publish the Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals, which include a guide to the referencing style commonly known as Vancouver style (because the first conference at which the style was established was held in Vancouver).

https://student.unsw.edu.au/academic-skills
Academic Skills Support and Resources

http://lib.unsw.adfa.edu.au/elise11/home/about.html
ELISE | UNSW Study Skills Tutorial

Academic honesty and plagiarism

UNSW has an ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of learning informed by academic integrity. All UNSW staff and students have a responsibility to adhere to this principle of academic integrity. Plagiarism undermines academic integrity and is not tolerated at UNSW.

At UNSW plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct and is viewed very seriously. The following notes describe what plagiarism is and where you can obtain additional information about it. It is part of your responsibility as a student of UNSW to ensure that you understand what plagiarism is, so that you avoid it in any of your assignments and other academic work.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is defined as using the words or ideas of others and passing them off as your own. Plagiarism is a type of intellectual theft. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without proper acknowledgement. UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

- **Copying:** Using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This includes copying materials, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document, presentation, composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, website, internet, other electronic resource, or another person's assignment, without appropriate acknowledgement.

- **Inappropriate paraphrasing**: Changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and/or progression of ideas of the original, and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit and to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without appropriate referencing.

- **Collusion:** Presenting work as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people. Collusion includes students providing their work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task and passing it off as your own, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work. In addition, it is important that students understand that it is not permissible to buy essay/writing services from third parties. Nor is it permissible to sell copies of lecture or tutorial notes as students do not own the rights to this intellectual property.

- **Inappropriate citation:** Citing sources which have not been read, without acknowledging the 'secondary' source from which knowledge of them has been obtained.

- **Self-plagiarism:** 'Self-plagiarism' occurs where an author republishes their own previously written work and presents it as new findings without referencing the earlier work, either in its entirety or partially. Self-plagiarism is also referred to as 'recycling', 'duplication', or 'multiple submissions of research findings' without disclosure. In the student context, self-plagiarism includes re-using parts of, or all of, a body of work that has already been submitted for assessment without proper citation.

Where can I find more information?

In many cases, plagiarism can be the result of inexperience or poor academic skills, rather than the deliberate intention to deceive. The University has adopted an educative approach to plagiarism and developed a range of resources to support students, which are outlined below.

1. UNSW's Plagiarism & Academic Integrity Website

This site aims to address three issues that often result in plagiarism: unfamiliarity with the concept of plagiarism; knowing how it occurs, and developing the necessary academic skills to avoid plagiarism. As a student, you will be able to use this collection of resources (worked examples, activities and links) to improve your all-round academic literacy and, consequently, reduce the possibilities for plagiarism. More information is available at: https://student.unsw.edu.au/academic-skills. UNSW has also produced a booklet to assist you with essential information for avoiding plagiarism: my.unsw.edu.au/student/academiclife/Plagiarism.pdf

2. The Learning Centre

The Learning Centre (www.lc.unsw.edu.au) provides a range of programs and resources for students including website materials, workshops, individual tuition and online tutorials to aid students in:

- correct referencing practices and citation practices;
- paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing, and time management;
- appropriate use of, and attribution for, a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

3. The Elise Study Skills tutorial

ELISE (Enabling Library & Information Skills for Everyone) is an online tutorial to help you understand how to find and use information for your assignments or research. It will also help you understand plagiarism and how to avoid it. The Elise Study Skills tutorial is *highly recommended* to postgraduate students in their first semester of study. See http://lib.unsw.adfa.edu.au/elise11/home/about.html

Addressing plagiarism and academic misconduct

As a postgraduate student you need to be aware that any allegation of plagiarism needs to be investigated by the School and that if the allegation is proven, the student is placed on the **UNSW Student Plagiarism and Misconduct Register**.

Plagiarism varies in its extent and seriousness and procedures are in place that deal with plagiarism through education and referral to the Learning Centre to more formal reprimands and penalties depending on the seriousness of the plagiarism and previous history of the student. Penalties for students found guilty of repeated plagiarism can include a reduction in marks, failing a course, or for more serious matters, suspension or exclusion from the University see: www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf and https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/plagiarismprocedure.pdf

UNSW student code

The UNSW Student Code provides a framework for the standard of conduct expected of UNSW students with respect to their academic integrity and behaviour. It outlines the primary obligations of students, and directs staff and students to the Code and related procedures https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentcodepolicy.pdf.

Presentation of your project report

Document presentation

Main text

Your report should be in a legible font of at least 12 point, with 1.5 or double spacing, and margins at least 2.5 cm on all sides. Leave time before the due date to check it carefully for spelling and grammar.

Diagrams, charts, photographs and other visual items

Tables and diagrams should be included either each one where it is referred to within the text, or all together at the end of main text section with their positions indicated in the text ('Table 3 about here'). Follow the journal's style guidelines if your report is in the form of a manuscript for submission to a journal.

Submitting your project report

Submit your project report via Moodle by the due date and after your supervisor has confirmed that your report is ready for examination. Note that as for any other assignment submitted electronically, your report will be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin.

1. All project reports must be submitted via the Turnitin assignment drop-boxes, available in the Moodle course site, by the due date. Turnitin is a similarity detection software package that enables assignments to be checked for plagiarism including improper citation or misappropriated content. Each report submitted to Turnitin is checked against the submitted reports of other students as well as the internet and key resources selected by the course convenor. If you are unfamiliar with the Turnitin software, a demonstration can be found at: https://student.unsw.edu.au/turnitin-support

2. You can view the **originality report** of your submission and resubmit as often as you wish until the report due date. This will help you in self-reviewing and revising your submission until the due date. Please note that draft reports submitted in this way will be regarded as the final version at the due date if you have not uploaded a subsequent, finalised version (each file uploaded overwrites the previous version). **No resubmissions will be allowed after the due date and time of the assignment without permission.**

IMPORTANT: The first submission generates an originality report almost **immediately.** For the second or subsequent submissions there is a **24-hour delay** between time of submission and the originality report being available. You will need to allow for 24 hours before your assignment due date and time, if you want to see an originality report before submitting the final version.

3. Only use your student ID to identify yourself in your report (**DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME**). All projects submitted to the Turnitin database will be used to determine whether other students in your course, and in the future, have plagiarised or inappropriately included work that is not their own. Therefore, personal details (such as your name and/or contact details which can be used to identify you) should be removed from your report to protect your privacy.

4. Please note, the closing time for reports is shown in Australian Eastern Standard Time. Please factor this in when submitting projects from outside NSW.

5. You will need to include your student ID, course code, date and assignment title in the header or footer on every page, and in the file name.

6. You are not required to submit a cover sheet with your report. Instead, there is a checkbox within the Turnitin drop-box that you will need to tick in order to submit your report. By ticking the checkbox you are confirming that the work you are submitting is entirely original.

7. After you submit your file, Turnitin will display a digital receipt in your browser window. If you can't see a receipt it means that you have not successfully submitted your file. A copy of the receipt is also sent to your e-mail address. Save the receipt and the paper ID it contains, as this is proof of a completed submission.

8. You need to arrange to send your final Turnitin report and originality report to your Supervisor for marking. To do this, you need to open your assignment in the Originality report view, then go to the bottom left hand corner of the 'document viewer', there is a little printer icon. Hover over the printer icon and you will be given the option 'Download PDF of current view for printing', click on this then send the PDF to your Supervisor.

Examination of your report

Your report will be examined by your supervisor and by one external examiner nominated by your supervisor and approved by the program director.

When examination is complete, you will have access to your examiners' comments and your result via Moodle.

Project Guidelines

Section 3

For examiners

This section is addressed to examiners and provides information on general considerations and assessment criteria for the project. It also provides guidance to students about what examiners will be looking for in examining projects.

Introduction

Two examiners assess the project, one of whom is usually the supervisor. In some circumstances an alternative examiner may be appointed. The student being assessed is entitled to read the examiners' comments.

Examiners are asked to assess the quality of work as evidenced by the project report, and also to comment upon adherence to the report title, literature review, critical analysis and skills in scientific writing.

While projects may vary in scope, the examiner may wish to consider the following points:

- are the project aims well formulated (e.g. scope, boundaries, purpose, desired outcomes)?
- are the background conditions described in sufficient detail to provide a rationale for the project?
- are relevant concepts and empirical findings critically reviewed to draw light on the subject matter of the project?
- are the activities to deal with the stated problems and aims of the study appropriate (consistent and reflecting an adequate amount of effort)?
- are the findings and experiences well summarised?
- are the lessons derived from the study adequately discussed, and are the implications related to the candidate's own situation and conditions?
- is there evidence of a self-critical approach to the preparation of the report by the student?

Important general considerations for examiners

- The project is only part of a postgraduate program, equivalent in workload to a 6 UoC course. It is *not* equivalent to a Major Project (18 UoC) or to a Master's degree by research and the report is *not* equivalent to a Master's research thesis.

- The aims, objectives, scope and design of the project and report will vary according to the issue being researched, and the constraints of the methods and sample chosen.

- Students will vary in their style of writing, presentation, and grammatical expression, but a minimum standard that is consistent with academic research at a postgraduate level should apply.

- A minimum standard in terms of the academic conduct of the project should also apply, and the report should be assessed against the educational aims and objectives of the research project as outlined above.

- It is not necessary that students will have collected original data, and it is acceptable for a student to:

  o examine data that has already been collected for a research project that has already been approved by an appropriate organisation or ethics committee (with the permission of the organisation or individuals that own the data).

  o examine data that is already in the public domain (with permission or acknowledgment of the source of the data as appropriate).

  o conduct a quality assurance audit or evaluation (with appropriate ethics committee approval if required).

  o conduct or evaluate an intervention or evaluate an existing program (with appropriate ethics committee approval if required).

- The examiners should have expertise in the area of interest and the methodology used. However, it may be necessary to seek advice from other academic staff on issues such as statistical analysis, qualitative methodology or clinical implications, if both the assessors are unfamiliar with some aspects of the project.

- Not all projects require formal ethics committee approval. However, the assessors should assess whether all appropriate research ethics considerations and processes have been followed in the planning and conduct of the project.

UNSW School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Assessment criteria for the report

The assessment criteria for the report will vary according to the issue being studied and the methodology chosen by the student. The following are assessment criteria that generally apply to project and research reports at a postgraduate level:

Title

Does it clearly describe the nature of the project?

Abstract

Does it accurately summarise the main aims, research question, methods (including when and where the study was done, nature of sample, and analytical methods), results, conclusions and recommendations?

Introduction

Is there a clear statement of the problem, issue, or research question, and is the rationale or the background of the project based on published literature or a published need for research on the issue?

Aims and objectives

Are the aims and objectives clearly stated and do the objectives logically follow from the overall aim?

Do the aims and objectives clearly reflect the stated problem or issue, and background or rationale to the issue?

Is the report clear on the intended outcomes of the project?

Literature review

Has the student carried out a literature search of adequate depth and scope?

Does it include a review of both historical and current references?

Is there a variety of sources other than journal literature?

Does the depth of search reflect adequate time spent?

Is the review relevant to the issue being studied and the aims and objectives of the project set by the student?

Are all ideas, words and other materials such as tables or diagrams from other people correctly acknowledged? Are all sources correctly and appropriately cited?

Is the citation and referencing style accurate and consistent?

Has the student avoided plagiarism and excess quoting?

Methods

Is there a clear description of the:

- conduct of the study

- study and sample populations
- sampling method and number
- sample inclusion and exclusion criteria
- survey instrument or intervention
- source and features of the dataset that was analysed
- method of the analysis
- statistical tests?

Does the survey instrument, questionnaire or intervention (if developed by the student) show original thinking?

Is the survey instrument or intervention (if not developed by the student) a published or validated one?

Is the data analysis appropriate to the method?

Has the conduct of the project addressed ethical considerations and followed sound research ethics processes?

Are there appropriate subject information statements and consent forms if relevant?

Results

Is the response rate of the survey or data collection stated?

Are the results and findings presented in a clear, unambiguous and consistent format?

Are all figures, tables and graphs numbers and labelled, and explained in the text?

Are the statistical tests correct and appropriate for the method?

Have the findings and the results of any statistical tests been correctly and accurately interpreted?

Do the results logically reflect the method used and the stated aims and objectives of the study?

Discussion

Does the student give an accurate interpretation of the findings and implications of the results?

Are the results discussed in relation to the literature the student has searched and reviewed as well as any comparable studies?

Are the results discussed in relation to the stated problem, research question, aims and objectives of the study?

Does the student reflect on and discuss any limitations or constraints of the study?

Conclusions

Are the key results, interpretations and implications accurately summarised?

Do the conclusions reflect accurately the results and interpretation?

Recommendations

Does the student make any recommendations in relation to future research or actions as a result of their study?

Are they feasible and relevant to the issue that was studied?

Reference list

Does it follow an accurate and consistent format in an appropriate referencing style?

Are all references, figures and tables used in the text cited in the bibliography?

Appendices

Are all relevant questionnaires, letters, ethics approvals included in an appendix?

Assessment of presentation style, grammar and spelling

The style of presentation, writing, grammar and spelling should meet the standard expected of a postgraduate student. This may not be as polished as published work or a research thesis, but should be good enough for the report to be submitted to a journal for review or circulated as an organisation report.

Assessment of a literature review as a project

A literature review should meet the following criteria:

- The review is comprehensive in its scope and depth, in that the review should encompass :
  - o historical and current sources
  - o local, national and international sources
  - o a variety of types of sources such as journal articles, monographs, symposium and conference reports, government reports, and peer-reviewed or scientifically valid online sources

- The review addresses a current and important issue, and asks a specific research question that is clearly defined, is related to public health or health management, and will add to current scientific knowledge about the issue.

- The review also includes a discussion, conclusion and recommendations in relation to the purpose or the research question posed by the review.

- The student uses a comprehensive method in their literature search such as current relevant databases, and organisations such as the Cochrane Foundation.

- The minimum length should be the same as a normal research project.

The assessment grades

When examining the final report the examiners will apply these grading criteria.

Fail (< 50%)
This grade is used when the student has not submitted completed work for assessment, failed to comply with a prescribed remedial process, misunderstood the point of the project or failed to address key issues. The literature review may rely on retelling other sources with inadequate analysis or development of an argument. Important research may be poorly performed and the results presented in a superficial manner that shows little attention to detail and inadequate analysis. Overall the written report displays little coherence, with the conclusions being poorly substantiated by the research conducted or the literature cited.

Pass (50–65%)
The report is satisfactory. The student has demonstrated a relatively superficial or limited understanding of the core aspects of the topic. The project report may contain reasonable components, but be minimally integrated or fail to synthesise the report into a convincing coherent statement or argument. Written work displays little evidence that the student is capable of transforming the literature into personal understanding or that the student is able to communicate that understanding. Elements of the project are treated superficially.

Credit (65–74%)
The project report comes together to make a broadly coherent whole. The report addresses the topic selected, makes a sound argument, draws on appropriate evidence, and shows some selectivity and judgment in deciding what is important and what is not. The project report demonstrates an understanding of the literature relevant to this topic. Communication is clear and effective.

Distinction (75–84%)
This level of performance involves all of the characteristics of a credit performance but also a level of originality, creativity or depth of thought and understanding. The work might involve a high level of abstract thinking, or the ability to take an idea or an application into a new context, understand the demands of that context and make modifications. The report is well constructed and demonstrates understanding of the relevant literature with a clear synthesis of ideas .

High Distinction (85–100%)
This level of performance involves all of the characteristics of a distinction performance where all aspects of the report are well done and the scope of the work described is both substantial and represents an original contribution to the field of research. The project report is of sufficient standard to have a high probability of being published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Project guidelines

Appendix

Examples of previous projects

Effectiveness of surgical antimicrobial prophylaxis in reducing surgical site infections and prevalence of antibiotic resistance: a project to assess the compliance of surgeons with evidence-based guidelines for surgical antibiotic prophylaxis

> Supervised by infectious disease epidemiologist SPHCM staff member and co-supervised by head of infectious diseases department of a hospital. Review of <500 patient records. Records included medical, anaesthetics, nursing records and medication charts in sequential order. No direct contact with patients or treating clinicians.

Travel health advice, vaccination and malaria prophylaxis in a sample of Australian travellers departing Melbourne Airport

> Supervised by SPHCM staff member, infectious disease epidemiologist with travel research experience. Analysis of previously collected data from Australian residents aged ≥18 years departing to highly endemic countries or regions of infectious diseases.

The community cost and burden of hepatitis A in Victoria, Australia

> Supervised by SPHCM staff member, infectious disease epidemiologist. Analysis of previously collected data on hepatitis A resource use in 89 notified cases.

The use of medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA) for the purpose of controlling 'problematic' sexual behaviours and preventing sex offender recidivism

> Supervised by SPHCM staff member, social scientist with experience in sexuality research. A critical review of the (very limited) literature on the effectiveness of the use of medroxyprogesterone acetate (Depo-Provera) as anti-libidinal intervention in prisons and mental health care.

Factors associated with influenza vaccine uptake in a sample of Australian adults and assessment of the validity of self-reported vaccine uptake

Supervised by SPHCM staff member, infectious disease epidemiologist. A substudy from a previously conducted case–control study. Cases were in-patients with acute ischaemic heart disease and controls were outpatients without acute ischaemic heart disease. Objectives were to understand demographic factors associated with uptake of influenza vaccine and to assess the validity of self-reported receipt of the annual vaccine.

A study on the acceptability of contraceptive implants in Tonga

Supervised by SPHCM staff members, both social scientists with international research experience. Analysis by a student employed in Tonga of data already being collected at a family planning clinic, with the addition of questions to the interview schedule and two focus group discussions.

The known and the unknown: Effects of conflict and post-conflict environments on maternal health in Sub-Saharan Africa

Supervised by two SPHCM staff members, both social scientists with international research experience. Analysis of published data on conflict in several countries and on health outcomes such as maternal and neonatal mortality.

Examining differences in knowledge, attitudes and practice among men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people in Suva and Lautoka, Fiji

Supervised by SPHCM staff member, social scientist with survey research experience in the Pacific. Analysis of data collected in an existing study, to see whether attendance at and engagement with services for specific groups led to better knowledge about HIV transmission, condom use and attitudes towards people with HIV.

Mobility and HIV risk amongst men who cross the PNG/Indonesia border between Skou and Wutung

Supervised by SPHCM staff members, HIV social scientists with experience in Papua New Guinea. Analysis of existing data from an ARC Linkage project, to see whether men in Papua New Guinea had higher HIV risks (paying for sex, tattooing, penile inserts etc.) when crossing the border into West Papua.

Trends in mortality in Bangladesh

Supervised by SPHCM staff member, epidemiologist and demographer with international experience. Based on published data, some of it already collected. Critical examination of official published data showing improvements in infant and maternal mortality and life expectancy in comparison with original raw data, where available.

What Cambodia can learn from the NSW Disease Surveillance system

> Supervised by SPHCM staff member with expertise in infectious disease epidemiology and health care management. Examination of how disease incidence data are collected for the NSW Ministry of Health, to allow comparison (in a future study) with Cambodia's system.

A proxy measure of hand hygiene compliance

> Supervised by SPHCM staff member with expertise in infectious disease epidemiology and health care management. An investigation of published annual accounts and hospital purchase orders to detect changes in product use that might indicate changes in compliance with hand hygiene guidelines.