



UNSW
SYDNEY

School of Education

EDST5458
Researching Special Education

Term 1 2021

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IMPORTANT:

For student policies and procedures relating to assessment, attendance and student support, please see website, <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/courses/course-outlines/>

The School of Education acknowledges the Bedegal people as the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we learn and teach.

1. LOCATION

Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture
School of Education
EDST 5458 Researching Special Education (6 units of credit)
Term 1 2021

2. STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Course Coordinator: Prof Terry Cumming
Office Location: Morven Brown G29
Email: t.cumming@unsw.edu.au
Availability: Tuesdays 11am-1pm

3. COURSE DETAILS

Course Name	Researching Special Education
Credit Points	6 units of credit (uoc)
Workload	Includes 150 hours including the completion of online activities, readings, assessment, and follow up activities. You should allow 2 hours per week to complete the online activities. Additional time will be required to complete the reading and assessment tasks.
Schedule	http://classutil.unsw.edu.au/EDST_T1.html#EDST5458T1

SUMMARY OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to support students to explore and critique their chosen area of research by locating it in the context of key issues and approaches in special education and viewing it from a diversity of methodological perspectives. The course introduces the impact of different epistemological and methodological approaches in special education research and will also encourage students to build collaboration with others in the course using self and peer review. This course is unique in that it is the first education course to be a part of the UNSW Sydney/ASU PLuS Alliance, meaning that students from both universities will be enrolled in the course. This will provide you with the unique opportunity to experience and international perspective on special education.

THE MAIN WAYS IN WHICH THE COURSE HAS CHANGED SINCE LAST TIME AS A RESULT OF STUDENT FEEDBACK:

- Virtual office hours are set but will be flexible, to account for time zones and student work schedules/outside commitments by scheduling an appointment for zoom or a phone call.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Outcome	Assessment/s
1 Understand key concepts in special education research including purpose(s) of doing research, key philosophical and ethical issues, researcher/practitioner positionality/role, and the place of research in teachers' work and in special education more broadly	1, 2
2 Develop critical reading and synthesis skills in the context of critiquing the methodology of published research in special education;	1
3 Build knowledge and awareness of research methods, including different techniques for data collection, analysis, reporting, and engaging with existing special education research literature	1, 2
4 Build skills and understandings as preparation for conducting a small-scale project in education	2

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Standard	Assessment/s
1 Advanced disciplinary knowledge and practices Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the field of education as it relates to their specialist area of study, and the ability to synthesize and apply disciplinary principles and practices to new or complex environments.	1, 2
2 Enquiry-based learning Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of research-based learning and the ability to plan, analyse, present implement and evaluate complex activities that contribute to advanced professional practice and/or intellectual scholarship in education	1, 2
3 Cognitive skills and critical thinking Demonstrate advanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills	1, 2
4 Communication, adaptive and interactional skills Communicate effectively to a range of audiences, and be capable of independent and collaborative enquiry and team-based leadership	1, 2
5 Global outlook Demonstrate an understanding of international perspectives relevant to the educational field	1, 2
6 Ethics Demonstrate an advanced capacity to recognise and negotiate the complex and often contested values and ethical practices that underlie education	1

4. RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSION OF CONTENT AND TEACHING APPROACH

Research in education is relevant to all educational contexts and to all teachers. The course will explore and critique a variety of published research texts, and will build participants' skills in engaging with, making use of, and critiquing existing research. The development of theoretical understanding and analytical skill is a key MEd programme outcome.

This course positions teachers as *producers* as well as *consumers* of educational research, and beyond engaging with existing research, participants will learn the relevant skills to conduct a small research project relevant to their own special education teaching context(s). The development of procedural as well as declarative knowledge is therefore the core outcome of the course and is prioritised throughout.

Teaching on the course is driven by a critical engagement with readings and the core textbook. Online class discussions, centred around the key readings, allow for theory and analysis to be developed but also **applied**, with the aim of producing active, engaged student-researchers who will subsequently be well equipped to apply the knowledge and skills developed in their own teaching/research contexts.

5. TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Explicit teaching, including reading and/or listening to audio-visual materials to foster interest and support learning.
- Structured occasions for critical reflection on issues raised in the course and on others' ideas.
- Opportunities for peer and instructor interaction via forums, message boards, and chat, allowing you the opportunity to demonstrate your capacity to communicate, to question, and to problem solve.
- Completion of online modules and activities to permit flexible interaction with course materials.
- Use of quizzes at the end of each module/prescribed readings for students to self-assess your understanding of key concepts.

These activities will occur in a climate that is supportive and inclusive of all learners.

6. COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Module	Lecture Topic
Module 1	Introduction to special education research: conducting a literature search, APA style, journal article format Ethical issues in special education: conducting research with vulnerable populations, *UNSW Students: National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, UNSW HREC Principles of Research: research questions, variables, hypotheses, identifying and recruiting participants
Module 2	Effect size and meta-analysis: effect size, meta-analysis, systematic reviews, PRISMA Evaluating and composing research articles: Selecting a journal, identifying the basic format, reviewing the literature, presenting evidence, getting feedback, making revisions, determining the author's motivation, identifying the contribution to knowledge, theory, or practice, importance of research design and methodology, assessing the findings, conclusions, writing and layout of the article
Module 3	Qualitative Research: epistemologies, paradigms, qualitative research methods, methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials, trustworthiness and validity in qualitative research, presenting qualitative research
Module 4	Quantitative Research: screening and cleaning your data, graphing your data, normal distributions, correlation, regression, comparing means, non-parametric tests, categorical data analysis
Module 5	Small n Designs: ABA, multiple baseline designs

Modules 2, 3, and 4 are designed to be completed over a two-week period. Module 1 should take 3 weeks. Module 5 should take 1 week.

7. RESOURCES

Required Readings

- Rumrill, P. D., Cook, B. G., & Wiley, A. L. (2011). Research in special education: Designs, methods, and applications. Charles C Thomas Publishers. (available as a free ebook through the Leganto link on the course's Moodle site)

Further Readings

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th Ed.). London: SAGE.
- Field, A. (2015). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics. London: SAGE.
- Pallant, J. (2016). SPSS survival manual. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological. London: SAGE.

All students are expected to access the course's LMS on a regular basis for course materials, information, and announcements.

8. ASSESSMENT

Assessment Task	Length	Weight	Student Learning Outcomes Assessed	Program Learning Outcomes Assessed	Due Date
Task 1: Critical Reflections on Published Research	2000 words	40%	1-3	1-6	Monday March 29 th by 5pm
Task 2: Research Case Studies	4000 words	60%	1,3-4	1-5	Monday May 3 rd by 5pm

Submission of assessments

Students are required to follow their lecturer's instructions when submitting their work for assessment. All assessment will be submitted online via Moodle by 5pm. Students are also required to keep all drafts, original data and other evidence of the authenticity of the work for at least one year after examination. If an assessment is mislaid the student is responsible for providing a further copy. Please see the Student Policies and Procedures for information regarding submission, extensions, special consideration, late penalties and hurdle requirements etc. <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/courses/course-outlines/>

Assessment Details

Assignment 1: Critical reflection on published research.

This task requires you to find and select two peer reviewed original research papers published within the last 10 years. Answer the following questions critically:

1. *Briefly summarise* each of the two texts in terms of their topic(s) and where they 'fit' into the landscape of special education research (e.g. 'this is a paper in the area of autism that found...')
2. *Briefly describe the research method* used in each paper and each paper's *main finding/s* (e.g. 'this is a qualitative paper that used student focus groups and interpretive data analysis to show that...')
3. For each paper, *critique the research method used as it relates to the topic* – what are the strengths and weaknesses of using this method for this research problem, what other way/s might have been better, and how might *you* have approached the research problem?
4. Comment briefly on the *writing and layout of the paper*: to what extent did you find it easy or difficult (and/or interesting or not interesting!) to read? How might the writer have improved it?

Assessment 2: Research Case Studies. Choose 4 of the following case studies. Write a methodology section for each that includes:

1. Research question(s)
2. Participants (if applicable)
 - a. Who would you include in the study? Age? Disability? - Criteria for who is included or excluded from participating
 - b. How many participants would you need? *Justify with research
3. Setting
4. Instruments/Data collection
 - a. What kind of data are you collecting? (quantitative or qualitative)
 - b. How would you collect it?
 - c. Describe any specific measurement instruments you are using (if applicable)
5. Analysis
 - a. Describe how you will analyse the data *Justify with research
6. Ethics
 - a. Does the study require ethics approval?
 - b. Why or why not?
 - c. If yes, what institution(s) would you need to seek approval from?

** Remember a methodology section should be like a recipe- someone should be able to read it and replicate the study from the information given

1. You want to measure the effectiveness of video modelling compared to traditional paper-based social stories.
2. Your school has traditionally had high rates of student absences and suspensions. To address this, the principal is leading the implementation of a new program on trauma-informed teaching that is being implemented this year. How could you measure its effectiveness?
3. You want to determine if the practice of using mobile technology to support students with disability has an evidence base, and in what areas the practice has been shown to be effective.

4. You use an iPhone and transportation app to teach mobility skills to 3 adults with intellectual disabilities. You accompany each them on their journeys over 4 weeks and prompt them when they need assistance. You want to know if this is an effective way to teach these 3 adults to get from point A to point B.
5. Your school has committed to developing and implementing transition plans with strong student input for students with disability. You are interested in finding out how the students and their families feel about the instructional program you used to increase their participation.
6. You have recently been assigned to teach in a special education unit in a mainstream school. Your class will consist of high school students with autism. How would you discover what the literature suggests are the best practices for teaching communication?
7. You are interested in discovering what types of sexual education for students with intellectual disabilities exist in your city/school district/state, and how they are perceived by teachers, parents, and students.
8. How would you determine if there was a relationship between students' level of school connectedness and the number of their absences and suspensions?
9. You want to know how students with autism perceive their well-being while they are in school.
10. Your school has committed to implementing UDL to support its diverse learners. Your principal wants to determine if this approach is better than what has been done to include all students. Design a study where you compare the implementation of UDL principles to your school's existing approach.

UNSW SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
 FEEDBACK SHEET
 EDST5458: Researching Special Education

Student Name:

Student No.:

Assessment task 1: **Critical reflection**

SPECIFIC CRITERIA	(-) → (+)				
Understanding of special education and the key concepts involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of the task and its relationship to relevant areas of theory, research and practice • summaries of texts • representations of writers' arguments and methods • understanding of and issues with research methodologies used 					
Depth of analysis and/or critique in response to the task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depth of discussion of texts • depth of analysis and critiques of journal articles • clarity and depth of implications/recommendations 					
Familiarity with and relevance of professional and/or research literature used to support response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of research and professional literature on special education; resources are current and relevant 					
Structure and organization of project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriateness of overall structure of reflection paper • clarity and coherence of organisation, including use of section headings and summaries to enhance readability. 					
Presentation of response according to appropriate academic and linguistic conventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity, consistency and appropriateness of writing conventions • clarity and consistency in the format of the plan • clarity and appropriateness of sentence structure, vocabulary use, of spelling, punctuation and word length • Clarity and consistency of use of APA style 					
GENERAL COMMENTS					

Lecturer:

Date:

Recommended: /20 (FL PS CR DN HD)

Weighting: 60%

NB: The ticks in the various boxes are designed to provide feedback to students; they are not given equal weight in determining the recommended grade. Depending on the nature of the assessment task, lecturers may also contextualize and/or amend these specific criteria. **The recommended grade is tentative only, subject to standardisation processes and approval by the School of Education Learning and Teaching Committee.**

UNSW SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
 FEEDBACK SHEET
 EDST5458: Researching Special Education

Student Name:

Student No.:

Assessment task 2: **Research case studies**

SPECIFIC CRITERIA	(-) → (+)				
Understanding of special education and the key concepts involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of the task and its relationship to relevant areas of theory, research and practice • extent to which each of the components was addressed adequately • coordination and cohesion between sections, particularly research questions and research design 					
Depth of analysis and/or critique in response to the task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depth of understanding of research methodology, methods, and underlying issues • adequacy of consideration of ethical issues 					
Familiarity with and relevance of professional and/or research literature used to support response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of research and professional literature on special education; resources are current and relevant 					
Structure and organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriateness of overall structure • clarity and coherence of organisation, including use of section headings and summaries to enhance readability. 					
Presentation of response according to appropriate academic and linguistic conventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity and consistency of use of APA (7th ed.) style • clarity and consistency in the format of the report • clarity and appropriateness of sentence structure, vocabulary use, of spelling, punctuation and word length 					
GENERAL COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT TIME					

Lecturer:

Date:

Recommended: /20 (FL PS CR DN HD)

Weighting: 40%

NB: The ticks in the various boxes are designed to provide feedback to students; they are not given equal weight in determining the recommended grade. Depending on the nature of the assessment task, lecturers may also contextualize and/or amend these specific criteria. **The recommended grade is tentative only, subject to standardisation processes and approval by the School of Education Learning and Teaching Committee.**