School of Population Health

UNSW Medicine

School of Population Health

Research Project Guidelines

FOR STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS AND EXAMINERS

Acknowledgements

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Project guidelines

Section 1

The research project

A research project comprises an in-depth study of a relevant public health, global health, health management, or infectious diseases intelligence issue of topic. 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.

The School of Population Health offer 6, 12 and 18UOC research projects to eligible students in our postgraduate coursework programs. These guidelines provide information to guide students, supervisors and examiners on the scope and complexity of a research project, what students should aim to achieve, how to plan the project, important considerations when undertaking a research project, requirements for the project report and assessment criteria for examiners.

What is a research 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 new evidence to inform policy, practice and/or further academic research in your research area—the original contribution extends beyond the accepted knowledge that may be learnt from reading textbooks and published literature in the area.

There are a range of different types of research topics and methodologies that students may choose to focus their study. For example, you could study the prevalence of a public health problem using a range of different data sources, evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of an intervention, complete a small epidemiological survey, study client use of a health service, evaluate a program, conduct a policy analysis or conduct a scoping review or a systematic review with or without a quantitative meta-analysis. When planning the scope and complexity of the project, it is important to consider: the student's research knowledge, skills and experience at enrolment; the supervision team's expertise and time commitment to the student; and the UoC and associated time commitment across the period of enrolment. It is critical that the project is feasible to completed within the enrolled period.

There are many possible options for your project. The most feasible approach is to apply for an advertised project (see newsletter or course webpage) or talk to academics in the School or affiliated Centres about the potential to design a student project embedded within an existing project that has ethics approval and data collected. Some project examples include:

- Define a specific research question and analysis protocol that you can answer using an existing dataset that has ethical approval

- A systematic or scoping review with or without a quantitative meta-analysis 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 quantitative or qualitative research study of your own in which you collect and analyse original data

- A policy or media analysis.

The scope and complexity of a project will determine whether your project is suitable as a 6, 12 or 18UOC project and whether you complete your project full-time or part-time over one or more terms (see '*Which project should I take'* section for further details).

Learning objectives

Projects vary in their aims, scope and design; however, they should allow you to demonstrate your ability to apply the principles and methods 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, including the development of aims, objectives and research questions;

- Systematically collect relevant up-to-date information about the issue, either directly from the field (primary data) or from routinely collected data (secondary data) or from published studies;

- 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; and

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

You need to demonstrate that you are familiar with the research methods you utilise and are able to think critically.

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 your learnings from methodology courses such as Foundations of Epidemiology, Foundations of Biostatistics, Advanced Biostatistics, Epidemiological Methods, Qualitative Research Methods or Applied Research Methods for Public Health.

- Lead or contribute to an academic paper for peer-reviewed publication (highly encouraged for all students).

If you are considering enrolling in a research degree such as a Masters by Research or a PhD, a research project as part of your postgraduate coursework program will assist the Higher Degree Research Committee when evaluating your application in assessing whether you are ready to undertake a research degree. (See Articulation from Masters by Coursework to PhD section below)

Which project should I take?

There are three research project options for students. Suitability to enrol in these options is determined by: the student's prior research knowledge, skills and experience at enrolment, the scope of the project, the complexity of the analyses and amount of time required to successfully complete required components of the project within the allocated term/s. There

are also part-time options for the 12 and 18UOC research projects, which allow extended time to complete projects with a larger scope.

6 UOC Minor Project

A 6 UOC minor project should involve about the same amount of work as required for a 6 UOC course, i.e. 150 hours in total over the period of the term (teaching weeks plus exam period).

It is not feasible for students to collect original data because of the limited time available to conduct and report on the project. Students wishing to conduct fieldwork as part of their project should enrol in a 12 or 18UOC research project over multiple terms. If ethics is required, this must be approved prior to the commencement of the enrolled term.

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

- a research paper prepared in accordance with reporting guidelines is suitable for submission to an academic journal
- a report of about 5000 words similar to a technical report for an organisation (government, health service, non-government or community-based organisation etc.)

Examples of research projects suitable to a 6UOC Minor Project include:
- Analysis of previously collected qualitative or quantitative data
- A scoping review (e.g. "National sports injury prevention programs: a scoping review")

12 UOC Project

The 12UOC research project can be taken fulltime (i.e. 12UOC in one term) or part-time (i.e. 6UOC in two consecutive terms).

A 12 UOC project should involve about the same amount of work as required for two 6 UOC courses, i.e. 300 hours in total (teaching weeks plus exam period for both terms).

It is not usually feasible for students to collect original data if the 12 UOC project is taken full-time over one term. However, this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with students and supervisors asked to provide a plan B option to ensure the student can complete the project in the case that data collection does not proceed as planned. Projects will not be approved unless ethical approval is in place prior to the commencement of term.

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

- a research paper prepared in accordance with reporting guidelines is suitable for submission to an academic journal
- a report of about 10,000 words similar to a technical report for an organisation (government, health service, non-government or community-based organisation etc.), or a small dissertation paper

Examples of research projects suitable to a 12UOC Project include:

- Analysis of previously collected qualitative or quantitative data with substantial analysis plan (e.g. "Neonatal subgaleal haemorrhage in regional WA: a retrospective observational study).
- A narrative systematic review following a standard protocol, or a scoping review.

A note on systematic reviews: please note that the feasibility of systematic review proposals is challenging to assess without information about the number of titles/articles to be screened following the literature search. The scope of work to complete a systematic review to a publishable standard is usually extensive and requires multiple reviewers of articles and assessors of risk of bias. For this reason, students and supervisors are encouraged to consider a team approach to completion of systematic reviews, where each student (or other research team members) may complete a section of the review, with the opportunity for students to gain experience with all stages of the process from screening, data extraction, risk of bias assessment, synthesis and reporting for a selection of the titles/articles. In this case, each student is required to lead the methodological work for their part of the review (although they may collaborate on the screening process and risk of bias assessment) and independently draft an original report for submission as the course assessment. Supervisors may consider how the work from each student/team member can then contribute to a co-authored manuscript for publication.

18 UOC Project

The 18UOC research project is available to students enrolled in the Masters (extension) programs. The 18UOC Major Project can be taken fulltime (i.e. 18UOC in one term) or part-time across either two terms (i.e. 9UOC in two consecutive terms) or three terms (i.e. 6UOC in three consecutive terms).

A 18 UOC project should involve about the same amount of work as required for three 6 UOC courses, i.e. 450 hours in total (teaching weeks plus exam periods).

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

- a research paper prepared in accordance with reporting guidelines is suitable for submission to an academic journal
- a report of about 15,000 words similar to a technical report for an organisation (government, health service, non-government or community-based organisation etc.), or a small dissertation paper

Examples of research projects suitable to a 18UOC Major Project include:
- A systematic review following a standard protocol with a quantitative meta-analysis. Please see the note on systematic reviews in the 12UoC section above.
- Analysis of previously collected qualitative or quantitative data with substantial analysis plan or a small-scale study collecting primary data (e.g. "What is the frequency of clinical incidents due to pressure injuries, falls and medication commission/omission error", "Young peoples' experiences of enhanced STI testing strategies in remote Aboriginal Communities").

When research proposal applications are assessed prior to enrolment, a major focus is the feasibility for students to complete the project within the enrolled period/time commitment. The guidelines above may be adapted on a case-by-case basis after considering the risks to project completion.

Articulation from Masters by Coursework to PhD

Students who have completed a coursework Masters degree from the School will be considered for entry to our PhD program if they have a suitable research proposal and the agreement of two potential supervisors and have:

1. Successfully undertaken a 12 UOC or 18 UOC research project, as well as at least 6 UOC of a research methodology-related course from the below list:

- PHCM9120 Qualitative Research Methods
- PHCM9132 Applied Research Methods for Public Health
- PHCM9517 Advanced Biostatistics and Statistical Computing
- PHCM9518 Epidemiological Methods

2. Distinction average (75%) or above for the overall Masters coursework program.

3. A letter of support from the Head of School or delegate.

While articulation from our Masters by coursework components to a PhD is considered with completion of a research project, entry to a PhD is highly competitive. Scholarships are usually only given to outstanding applicants with research experience and at least 1 or 2 publications in peer reviewed journals of good standing at the time of application to the PhD. It may not be feasible to publish the work arising from a research project within the timeframe required to apply for a PhD in the following year.

For more information please have a look at the following link.
https://www.unsw.edu.au/medicine-health/our-schools/population-health/student-life/student-resources/postgraduate-research/articulation-masters-phd

Project guidelines

Section 2

For students and supervisors

Eligibility to undertake a project in your coursework degree

Students who are enrolled in one of the following programs:

- Master of Public Health (9045)
- Master of Health Leadership and Management (8901)
- Master of Global Health (9048)
- Master of Infectious Diseases Intelligence (8362)
- or any of the dual or extension programs

may choose to replace one of their coursework electives with a 6 or 12 unit of credit (UOC) research project, as long as they have completed at least 18 units of credit with a minimum WAM of 75 (i.e. Distinction) and have a project proposal approved by the Research Projects Co-ordinator.

Students enrolled in a Masters (extension) program are also eligible to enrol in an 18 UOC Major Project. Eligibility requirements are the same as for the 6 and 12 UOC Research Projects for students enrolled in these programs.

Students in programs or MPH specialisations with specified electives should check that the Research Project is specified as one of the permitted electives and that the project aligns with their chosen specialisation by consulting with their Specialisation Co-ordinator prior to seeking a project supervisor.

Students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma programs are not eligible to undertake a research project.

Planning your studies to undertake a research project?

Students are eligible to enrol in a research project after completion of 18UOC (i.e. three courses) and completion of their core courses. As such, students are advised to undertake a research project towards the end of your program. This is to ensure the development of foundational knowledge and skills required for undertaking research in the field and the opportunity to apply your learnings from the course work completed during your program.

When planning a project, students should also consider elective choices that align with the type of research project you plan to undertake and the analysis and interpretation that will be required. For example, if you submit a proposal to undertake an epidemiological research study and data analysis, it would be most suitable to have completed the Epidemiological Methods and Advanced Biostatistics and Statistical Computing elective courses.

Consideration of course selection should be undertaken in consultation with your Program Director or a proposed supervisor.

Courses which provide specific skills for research include:

- PHCM9794 Foundations of Epidemiology
- PHCM9795 Foundations of Biostatistics
- PHCM9120 Qualitative Research Methods
- PHCM9132 Applied Research Methods for Public Health
- PHCM9517 Advanced Biostatistics and Statistical Computing
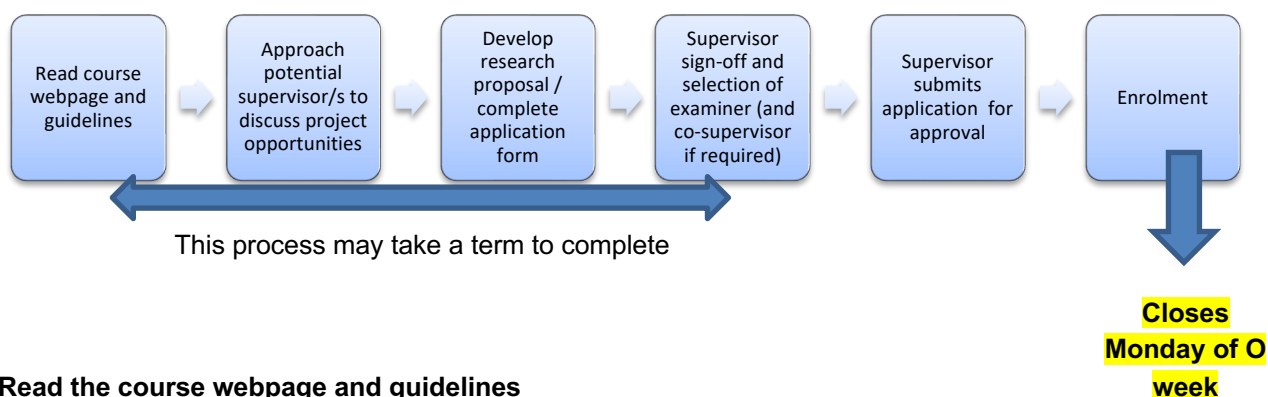- PHCM9518 Epidemiological Methods

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

Developing your research project proposal

There are three main approaches to developing a research project proposal and identifying one or more academic supervisors for your research project.

1. Apply to undertake one of the adverstised research project topics on the School's website;
2. Approach an academic who you would like to work with and ask them if there are opportunities to define a student project within one of their existing, larger projects;
3. Propose your own topic/methods and approach an academic with suitable expertise to see if they have the capacity and interest to supervise.

It takes considerable time to find an available supervisor and develop a proposal with your supervisor/s. Students must commence the process well in advance of the start of term. The overall process is described in the following flow-chart.

Read course webpage and guidelines → Approach potential supervisor/s to discuss project opportunities → Develop research proposal / complete application form → Supervisor sign-off and selection of examiner (and co-supervisor if required) → Supervisor submits application for approval → Enrolment

This process may take a term to complete

Closes Monday of O week

Read the course webpage and guidelines
If you are interested in undertaking a research project elective, you should read the course webpage and guidelines in detail at least one term prior to applying https://www.unsw.edu.au/medicine-health/our-schools/population-health/student-life/student-resources/postgraduate/research-project to enrol in a project.

Supervisor-offered projects
The most feasible option is to undertake an advertised project or define a project within an existing research project led by your supervisor. All student projects must have ethics approval and most require data to be available to the student for analysis from the start of the enrolled period.

Advertised projects may be found in the student newsletter or School webpage. Otherwise you may approach academics in the School or affiliated Centres who may have opportunities for you to undertake a student research project as part of a larger funded research project. Either way, try to find a supervisor whose work you have read and whose research topics and approaches align with your interests. For example, if you wish to do a qualitative project it is best to have at least one supervisor who has qualitative research expertise. To meet your supervision needs, you may need to discuss forming a supervision team with multiple types of expertise and availability to support your research knowledge/skill development during the project.

Students should read the guidance on early stage planning for research projects (available on the Course webpage) and directly contact potential supervisors. When the primary supervisor is from another organisation, the student and supervisor will also need to approach an academic within the School to co-supervise the project.

Student-developed projects
If you have a project that you would like to propose, draft a brief proposal or 'concept sheet' outlining the problem to be addressed, project aims and suggested methodology to send to an academic in the school whose research expertise aligns with the topic and/or methods. You will need to ask if the potential supervisor has the capacity and interest to supervise your proposal. Please note that ethics and data collection need to be in place at enrolment, so you will need to assess the feasibility of proposing a student-developed project.

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 term. 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, which may take weeks or months to obtain and impacts on the timelines for data collection and analysis (see below, p. 12-13).

Who can supervise a research project?

Academics with appointments in with the School of Population Health, adjunct or conjoint academics or a staff member at another UNSW Medicine and Health School or Centre (such as the Centre for Primary Healthcare and Equity, the Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation, The Kirby Institute, The George Institute for Global Health or the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre). If your primary supervisor is an adjunct or conjoint academics or a staff member at another UNSW Medicine and Health School or Centre you must also have a co-supervisor who is a member of the SPH teaching staff.

Finalising your project proposal

Once you have identified a supervisor, they will assist you to formulate an appropriate project proposal and outline of the project report to submit for review to the Research Project Coordinator.

You cannot self-enrol in a project. To enrol, you must submit the relevant quantitative research project application form or qualitative research project application form, signed by your supervisor, to Vanessa Green (v.green@unsw.edu.au). The application and project proposal must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to term commencement to ensure time for feedback and revision. Once your proposal has been approved by the Research Project Coordinator you will be able to enrol.

Review of your proposal includes the consideration of suitability of the project to a 6, 12 or 18UOC, feasibility of the project to be completed in the available time and any anticipated delays. The Research Project Coordinator may suggest changes to your proposal to minimise the risks to your project and optimise the chances for successful completion.

Ethics committee clearance

All UNSW Staff or Students who intend to conduct research involving human participants as part of an Honours, Diploma, Masters, Doctorate or other higher degree must apply for approval from the appropriate responsible ethics review body. Given the short time period to complete a research project within a 10-week trimester term, approval to enrol in a research project will only be given if ethical approval is either not required or approval is obtained prior to the commencement of term.

Human research is conducted with or about people, their biological materials or data (information) about them. It therefore includes a broad range of activities such as:

- Taking part in surveys, interviews or focus groups;
- Undergoing psychological, physiological or medical testing or treatment;
- Being observed by researchers;
- Researchers having access to participants' personal documents or other materials;
- The collection and use of participants' biological materials (body organs, tissues, fluids or exhaled breath); or
- Access to participants' information as part of an existing published or unpublished source/database

At UNSW, the review pathway for your human research project will depend on the level of risk that it poses to the participants. There are three review pathways; each pathway is reviewed via a different process.

- **Pathway 1:** Negligible Risk Research – Reviewed by an Executive Panel
- **Pathway 2:** Low Risk Research – Reviewed by a Human Ethics Advisory Panel
- **Pathway 3:** More than Low Risk Research – Reviewed by a Human Research Ethics Committee

If you are approved to enrol in a research project that does require ethics approval, it is important that you speak with your supervisor or the [UNSW Human Research Ethics](#) team if you are unsure about where you should be seeking approval from.

Your supervisor may already have ethics committee approval for the project you plan to undertake. If this is the case, then your supervisor may just need to submit a [Personnel Modification Form](#) so that you can have access to the data already collected. If the project has external ethical approval, your supervisor will need to register the project and your involvement with the [UNSW HREC](#).

When drafting your protocol and ethics application, you will need to consider the following issues: privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and possible adverse health or psychological risks for you or the study participants. The application process may include the submission of the data collection tools (e.g. questionnaire or interview guide), a participant information and consent form, any recruitment posters or social media advertisements and letters of support from any external organisations involved in the project. This is a time-consuming process and requires commencement of the ethics approval process well before the anticipated project start date. It is for this reason that ethics must be in place before you enrol in your project. If you will be involved in the ethics approval process, you need to begin discussions with your supervisor at least 2 months in advance, to ensure that you have approval prior to enrolment in your project.

See https://research.unsw.edu.au/guidelines-legislation-unsw-policies-human-research and click through for guidelines on privacy and other issues.

Funding

In general, you should not consider a project that requires funding to undertake. In no circumstances will the School of Population Health 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.

Research projects conducted outside Australia

Because of time constraints and considerations regarding student safety, adequate supervision and research protocol quality control, it is usually not possible to conduct fieldwork outside Australia, particularly for a research project to be completed in one term. However, it may be possible to analyse data collected outside Australia if you have already gained access to the data and permission to use it from the appropriate ethics committees.

Supervisors should note that if any data collected from another country 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 considered the time needed for any preparations such as community consultations, ethics approval and access to data.

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 on time (the deadline for final submission is communicated at the time of enrolment, it will be the end of your final term of enrolment).

The research project proposal

Please download the most current version of the application form and project proposal template for quantitative or qualitative research projects from the course webpage. Key components of the proposal will include: project title, background and rational, aims/research question; methodology, analysis plan, planned outputs, community consultation, ethics, funding, timeframe, knowledge/skill acquisition, and feasibility (including consideration of prior completed courses).

Students and supervisors should review the course rubric when drafting the research proposal to ensure they understand the reporting and assessment criteria for the course early. At enrolment, students and supervisors are required to nominate the appropriate reporting guidelines for their study design/methods from the Equator network site (e.g. CONSORT, STROBE, RECORD, PRISMA) or alternative framework for reporting if there are no published guidelines available (e.g. journal submission guidelines). The student is expected to draft their final report for assessment in accordance with the nominated reporting guidelines/framework.

Conducting your research

Your responsibilities

You are expected to:

* Schedule regular meetings (e.g. one hour per week) with your supervisor/s or arrange regular contact (e.g. Teams meeting) if you are away from the university.

* Submit a review of the relevant literature at an early stage; this will usually form the basis for the Introduction section of your final project report.

* Draft the project report in accordance with the nominated reporting guidelines, ensuring alignment with the assessment criteria in the course rubric. Students are advised to submit sections of your draft report to supervisors regularly while you are working on your project, so your supervisor can have input, review progress and provide feedback on writing.

* If you are unable to proceed with the project after the **census date** due to illness or other valid reasons, 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.

* Submit the final project report by the agreed deadline.

* Familiarise yourself with all relevant sources of information including School website and the UNSW Student Portal myUNSW, 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.

Responsible conduct of research

The University relies on the NHMRC, ARC, AVCC;

* *Australian Code for the responsible conduct of research 2018 Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018, and the

* *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (updated 2018)* https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018

The role of your supervisor

Your supervisor/s are expected to:

* meet regularly with you to support your research/project work. Your supervisor/s would normally expect to meet with you for at least one hour per week.

* set a written task suitable for your specific project, e.g. draft background, or literature review, or section of literature review, or approach/methods section and provide formative feedback on this written work prior to census date (in your first term of enrolment if part-time).

* inform you and your 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 at negotiated intervals throughout the project

* review a final draft of the project report or manuscript 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 or methods. Co-supervisors do not need to have an academic appointment within UNSW, but they must be approved by your supervisor as having expertise in the field of your study, which will be reviewed on your application form at enrolment.

- A co-supervisor may be required if your supervisor will be absent for some of the term. This co-supervisor must be a member of SPH 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.

* Co-supervisors are ordinarily not expected to mark, although if engaged for particular expertise they may provide input on aspects of the final submission.

Resources

For further information for planning your project see:

Boland, A., Cherry, G. and Dickson, R (2017). *Doing a Systematic Review*

A Student's Guide. Second Edition. Sage Publication

Aveyard, H. (2014). *Doing a literature review in health and social care: A practical guide*. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.

Bell. J. & Waters. S. (2016). *Doing your research project. A guide for first time researchers.* 6th 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.

Project guidelines

Section 3

The research project report

Drafting your project report

You are expected to draft an original research report that is of 'publishable quality' for your course assessment. This may form part, or all, of a manuscript for submission to an academic journal, co-authored with the supervisor/s and collaborators involved in the project. Alternatively, it may be prepared as a report, for example, for a policy agency or other organisation.

At enrolment, students and supervisors are required to nominate the appropriate reporting guidelines for their study design/methods from the [Equator network site](#) (e.g. CONSORT, STROBE, RECORD, PRISMA) or alternative framework for reporting if there are no published guidelines available (e.g. journal submission guidelines). The student is expected to draft their final report in accordance with the nominated reporting guidelines/framework. Additional content may be included in supplementary material as an appendix to the final report submitted for assessment.

All students are expected to submit a 300-500 word critical reflection on their research knowledge and skill development and experience during the project, with consideration of their learning outcomes.

Typically, your reports will include the sections described below.

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/isn't already known from your literature review), outline the study question (or problem or study hypothesis), and outline the aims and objectives of your study.

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.

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 for policy and practice, 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.

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.

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.

Resources for writing project reports

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

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th 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. (2012). *How to write and publish a scientific paper* (7th 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*. (4th 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

Submission requirements

It is the students' responsibility to submit their final report by the due date. With any research
project, unanticipated delays may occur and there may be grounds to request an extension.
Your supervisor should register the extended deadline with the Education Support Team
(Vanessa Green v.green@unsw.edu.au).

Upon submission, the student should send their supervisor, via email, the final report, the
nominated reporting guidelines, and the similarity report downloaded from Turnitin. The
Education Support Team will coordinate with the examiner, who will be provided with the
course rubric to guide assessment.

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 similarity report and a word version of your 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 along with your original report.

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.

The following notes describe what plagiarism is and where you can obtain additional information about it. It is part of your responsibility as a UNSW student 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 and 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. This can also include combining cited and non-cited (copied) passages.

- **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. This includes students providing their submitted work to another student for the purpose of them plagiarising, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work, or seeking or receiving payment for completing academic work. This should not be confused with academic collaboration.

- **Contract cheating:** Contract cheating is also known as engaging in 'ghost-writing'. It is a form of collusion. When a student or researcher engages another person to complete work for them and then submits the work as their own. This includes circumstances where a student or researcher submits work they may have edited which was substantially the work of another person, or where a student or researcher prepares a draft that is substantially modified by another (beyond minor editing).

- **Inappropriate citation:** Citing sources which have not been read, not acknowledging the 'secondary' source from which knowledge of them has been obtained. This may

include fabricating citations, or inaccurately citing sources which goes beyond typographical errors.

- **Self-plagiarism:** 'An author republishing their own previously submitted work and presenting it as new findings or work 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 a student is repeating a course, they should seek permission from the course coordinator before re-submitting, in whole or part, the same piece of assessment.

Where can I find more information?

UNSW categorises plagiarism into the following categories: 'Poor Scholarship', 'Minor Plagiarism', 'Moderate Plagiarism', 'Significant' Plagiarism' and 'Serious Plagiarism'. In many cases, 'Poor Scholarship' and 'Minor Plagiarism' is the result of inexperience or poor academic skills, rather than the deliberate intention to deceive. However, the same penalties may apply for plagiarism related to inexperience in scholarly writing and referencing requirements. As postgraduate students, it is your responsibility to ensure all work submitted complies with the rules of student conduct and academic integrity. 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 on the [UNSW Academic & Plagiarism Integrity](#) and the **UNSW Plagiarism Policy** website.

2. Addressing plagiarism and academic misconduct
Procedures are in place that are categorised as Poor Scholarship', 'Minor Plagiarism', 'Moderate Plagiarism', 'Significant' Plagiarism', based on the extent and seriousness of the case. Allegations at these levels are addressed at the School level by your Program Directors, who are nominated School Student Integrity Advisers. If the allegation is substantiated, the student is placed on the UNSW Plagiarism Register and penalties may apply. Any 'Serious Plagiarism' case is considered serious student misconduct and is referred to the UNSW Conduct and Integrity Office for investigation and determination. For more information see the [School Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](#) webpage:

3. Student Academic and Career Success
The [Student Academic and Career Success](#) (SACS) academic skills support hub provides a range of programs and resources for students including website materials, workshops, individual tuition and online tutorials to aid students in:

- correct referencing 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.

4. 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 tutorials is *highly recommended* to postgraduate students in their first term of study.

5. 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.

Examination of your report

Your report will be examined by your supervisor/s and by one external examiner nominated by your supervisor and approved by the Research Projects Coordinator. Your report will be assessed using the course rubric and your nominated reporting guideline. The final mark is an average of these 2 marks. When examination is complete, you will have access to your result via Moodle and examiners' comments via email.

Section 4

Examination of the report

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 and these should be provided either as comments in the report or in a separate word document sent to the Education Support team on completion of the marking.

Examiners are asked to assess the quality of work as evidenced by the project report/draft journal article, and to comment on the 4 broad assessment criteria as outlined below.

Marking guide and assessment criteria

The project is marked out of 100. Examiners will use the course rubric and nominated reporting guidelines to guide marking of the assessment. Written feedback to the student is optional.

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 suitable for the report to be submitted to a journal for review or circulated as an organisation report.

Important general considerations for examiners

- The project is part of a postgraduate program, equivalent in workload to a 6 UOC, 12 UOC or 18 UOC course. It is *not* equivalent to a Masters degree by research and the report is *not* equivalent to a Masters 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:

- 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).

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

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

- 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 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.

The assessment grades

The final marks for the report will be categorised into the following grades for the course.

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.