The University of Newcastle
Faculty of Education and Arts
School of Humanities and Social Science

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Course Overview
Semester: Semester 2: 2007
Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods
Case Study
Experience Based Learning
Self Directed Learning
Student Projects
Workshop

Brief Course Description
Students will develop an understanding of the role that research plays in social work practice and competence in planning a practice-based research study that would inform social work intervention. Students will attain knowledge and skills in qualitative and
quantitative methods that may be used in practice-based social research. Ethical issues and critical debates in social work research will also be examined.

**Contact Hours**
Workshop for 3 Hours per Week for the Full Term
Experience based learning

**Learning Materials/Texts**
Required and recommended reading will be available through Blackboard.

**Course Objectives**
The purpose of this course is to equip social work students with the skills and knowledge required to conduct practice-based research in the social work context. Students will:
1. Understand how social workers make use of research to inform practice
2. Develop knowledge in quantitative and qualitative research methods and an understanding of when particular methods are most appropriate to answer different types of research questions encountered in social work practice.
3. Gain practical skills in gathering and analysing research data.
4. Develop competence in identifying and appropriately responding to ethical issues encountered in social work research.
5. Be able to critically review the benefits and shortfalls of published research.
6. Engaged in informed debate on social, political, ethical, technical and practical issues surrounding social work research.
7. Students undertaking the honours stream of the degree will use the learning and tasks in this course as the basis for the individual research thesis completed in the final year of the degree.

**Course Content**
1. The role of research in social work practice.
2. Designing a research project.
3. Gathering quantitative and qualitative data.
4. Analysing quantitative and qualitative data.
5. Ethical and political issues in social work.
6. Critical appraisal of published research.
7. Writing a research proposal and an ethics application.

**Assessment Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>Written assignment 2000 words, 50%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>Written assignment 3000 words, 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td>Individual and group tasks (ungraded, but must be completed to a satisfactory standard in order to pass the course)</td>
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</table>

**Assumed Knowledge**
Completion of all 2nd year and semester 1 3rd year SWRK courses in the Bachelor of Social Work program
Plagiarism
University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:
- Copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment.
- Working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs. Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link:

The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -
- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items
Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:
1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;
must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Please go to the Policy at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:
- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
- **Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items** must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.
- **Requests for Rescheduling Exams** must be received in the Student Hub no later than ten working days prior the first date of the examination period.

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.

**Changing your Enrolment**
The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:

For semester 2 courses: 31 August 2007

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html

**Faculty Information**
The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students on campus.
The four Student Hubs are located at:

**Callaghan campus**
- Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Union Building
- Hunter Hub: Student Services Centre, Hunter side of campus

**City Precinct**
- City Hub & Information Common: University House, ground floor in combination with an Information Common for the City Precinct

**Ourimbah campus**
- Ourimbah Hub: Administration Building
Faculty websites

Faculty of Education and Arts
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/

Contact details
Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie
Phone: 02 4921 5000
Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

The Dean of Students
Resolution Precinct
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

Alteration of this Course Outline
No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at:
www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Essential Criteria in Assessment
This course contains compulsory components or assessment items that must be satisfactorily completed in order for a student to receive a pass mark or better for the
course. These essential elements are described in the CTS. Students need to participate in guided reading and small group work in order to satisfactorily complete this course.

Guided reading is important because it provides a knowledge base for student learning in the classroom and when completing assessment tasks. Through exercises and informed discussions students are able to ‘test out’ their understanding of the concepts in the readings and make links to course goals and objectives. Guided reading contributes to deeper levels of understanding and critique, increases motivation and comprehension throughout the course. See Part B of this outline for a description of the guided readings requirements.

Studentmail and Blackboard: www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/
This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Late assignments will be subject to the penalties described below.

Hard copy submission:
- **Type your assignments:** All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length:** The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
- **Proof read your work** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages** of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
- **University coversheet:** All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/studentguide/index.html
- **Assignments are to be deposited at any Student Hubs. Hubs are located at:**
  - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
  - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
  - Ground Floor, University House, City
  - Ground Floor, Administration Building, Ourimbah
  Any changes to this procedure will be announced during the semester.
- **Do not fax or email assignments:** Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse. Assignments mailed to Schools are accepted from the date posted.
- **Keep a copy of all assignments:** All students must date stamp their own assignments using the machine provided. Mailed assignments to schools are date-stamped upon receipt. However, it is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in hard copy and on disk.
Online copy submission to Turnitin
In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website:

- Assignment 1: Literature Review
- Assignment 2: Research proposal/ethics application

Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit one draft of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing.

Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.

Penalties for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the due date, without an approved extension of time will be penalised by the reduction of 5% of the possible maximum mark for the assessment item for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted more than ten days after the due date will be awarded zero marks.

Special Consideration/Extension of Time Applications
Students wishing to apply for Special Consideration or Extension of Time should obtain the appropriate form from the Student Hubs.
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/index.html

No Assignment Re-submission
Students who have failed an assignment are not permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. However, students are always welcome to contact their Tutor, Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

Remarks
Students can request to have their work re-marked by the Course Coordinator or Discipline Convenor (or their delegate); three outcomes are possible: the same grade, a lower grade, or a higher grade being awarded. Students may also appeal against their final result for a course. Please consult the University policy at:

Return of Assignments
Students can collect assignments from a nominated Student Hubs during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hubs to go to and the earliest date assignments will be available for collection. Students must present their student identification card to collect their assignment.

Preferred Referencing Style
In this course, it is recommended that you use the use the APA referencing system (similar to Harvard) for referencing sources of information used in assignments. Inadequate or incorrect reference to the work of others may be viewed as plagiarism and result in reduced marks or failure. An in-text citation names the author of the source, gives the date of publication, and for a direct quote includes a page number, in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of references provides publication information about the source; the list is alphabetised by authors’ last names (or by titles
for works without authors). Further information on referencing and general study skills can be obtained from Infoskills:

Student Representatives
We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions for improvement. Student Representatives are the channel of communication between students and the School Board. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on the School website.

Student Communication
Students should discuss any course related matters with their Tutor, Lecturer, or Course Coordinator in the first instance and then the relevant Discipline or Program Convenor. If this proves unsatisfactory, they should then contact the Head of School if required. Contact details can be found on the School website.

Essential Online Information for Students
Information on Class and Exam Timetables, Tutorial Online Registration, Learning Support, Campus Maps, Careers information, Counselling, the Health Service and a range of free Student Support Services can be found at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Fail (FF)</th>
<th>Pass (P)</th>
<th>Credit (C)</th>
<th>Distinction (D)</th>
<th>High Distinction (HD)</th>
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<tr>
<td>49% or less</td>
<td>An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar, etc.). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
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<td>50% to 64%</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.</td>
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<td>65% to 74%</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question, a capacity to integrate research into the discussion, and a critical appreciation of a range of different theoretical perspectives. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought. The work is coherent and accurate.</td>
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<td>75% to 84%</td>
<td>Evidence of substantial additional reading and/or research, and evidence of the ability to generalise from the theoretical content to develop an argument in an informed and original manner. The work is well organised, clearly expressed and shows a capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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<td>85% upwards</td>
<td>All of the above, plus a thorough understanding of the subject matter based on substantial additional reading and/or research. The work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion of the topic, particularly the theoretical issues involved, and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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In this course, students will gain an understanding of the role that research plays in social work practice, attain knowledge and skills in qualitative and quantitative methods, examine ethical issues and critical debates in social work research, and develop competence in designing a research study and in writing a research proposal/ethics application.

Social work graduates require a thorough understanding of research in order to critically appraise research that informs practice interventions and to conduct practice based research (particularly evaluation research and needs assessments). This is a requirement for program accreditation with the Australian Association of Social Workers.

Research is a core component for all Bachelor of Social Work students. For students within the honours stream in the Bachelor of Social Work program the successful completion of this course will equip them with the knowledge and skills required to conduct an individual piece of research at fourth year level. A literature review and research proposal/ethics application will be completed by all students as the assessment tasks in the course. For honours students, this will be the basis for their individual research project supervised in the 4th year of the program. The course will contribute to the following core skills outlined in the BSW program documentation:

1. Operate effectively with comprehensive and well founded knowledge, skills and ethical standards appropriate to their fields of study.
2. Acquire, organise and present information.
3. Reflect on and continue to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes.
4. Think logically, laterally, critically and creatively; analyse and synthesise.
5. Act effectively in decision making and problem solving.
6. Carry out research activities.
7. Communicate effectively as members of their communities.
8. Use information technology appropriately and competently.
9. Seek improvement in organisational, social and cultural contexts, in an ethical manner.
10. Recognise social, cultural, physical and intellectual diversity, including the history and diversity of indigenous peoples.
11. Recognise and respond appropriately to globalisation and other changes of context.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to equip social work students with the skills and knowledge required to conduct research in the social work context. Students will:
1. Understand how social workers make use of research to inform practice.
2. Develop knowledge in quantitative and qualitative research methods and an understanding of when particular methods are most appropriate to answer different types of research questions encountered in social work practice.
3. Gain practical skills in gathering and analysing research data.
4. Develop competence in identifying and appropriately responding to ethical issues encountered in social work research.
5. Be able to critically review the benefits and shortfalls of published research.
6. Engaged in informed debate on social, political, ethical, technical, and practical issues surrounding social work research.

Students undertaking the honours stream of the degree will use the learning and tasks in this course as the basis for the individual research thesis completed in the final year of the degree.

**Course Content**
1. The role of research in social work practice.
2. Designing a research project.
3. Gathering quantitative and qualitative data.
4. Analysing quantitative and qualitative data.
5. Ethical and political issues in social work research.
6. Critical appraisal of published research.
7. Writing a research proposal/ethics application.

**Learning Goals**
The learning goals for this course relate to the student’s ability to understand the important part research plays in social work practice. Hence areas of competency include:
1. The ability to conduct literature searches, to consult and network to identify and collect relevant background information to the research.
2. The ability to critically evaluate literature in a chosen topic area.
3. Knowledge of research theory and ethical and political issues associated with social work research and of contemporary debates about measurement and evidence based practice.
4. Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research designs and their application.
5. Knowledge of data collection methods and an ability to apply appropriate methods to particular research designs.
6. Develop an understanding of the way in which research might enhance social work practice, and its role in client empowerment, social advocacy and organisational change.

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<tr>
<th>FRI</th>
<th>SWRK3005: SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20/7</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>27/7</td>
<td>Qualitative (interpretive) and quantitative (EBP) methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>Conducting literature reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>Conducting literature reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>27/8</td>
<td>Research methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>24/8</td>
<td>Data analysis methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>31/8</td>
<td>Fieldwork [Assignment 1: Literature review due]</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>Ethical issues in research</td>
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<tr>
<td>14/9</td>
<td>Writing the research proposal/ethics application</td>
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<td>21/9</td>
<td>Writing the research proposal/ethics application</td>
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<tr>
<td>28/9</td>
<td>Writing the research proposal/ethics application</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>SEMESTER BREAK</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>19/10</td>
<td>Closure</td>
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<tr>
<td>26/10</td>
<td>Attend fourth year conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>Complete and hand in research proposal/ethics application</td>
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ASSESSMENTS

Guided Reading Program
The weekly reflections on readings should be handed in each Friday.
Value: Ungraded
Due date: Friday
Length: One A4 page – typed, double spaced, dot points, 12 point font
Grading: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
Criteria: Evidence of reading and critical analysis and completion of task by due date

Assignment 1: Literature Review
Students will compile a literature review to hand in at the end of week 7 – 31 August 2007. Guidelines are provided below.

GUIDELINES FOR LITERATURE REVIEWS
1. Refine your area so that you can target just what you are looking for. Consult the Library of Congress to ensure you are using appropriate terminology.
2. Literature must be current, i.e. preferably written in the last five years or at most in the last ten years. Thereafter the literature becomes dated and is considered mainly for its historical importance. If you have a choice, cite the most recent literature unless the older citations are useful for additional perspectives.
3. Some literature is seminal and enduring, like the writings of Marx and Freud. It is always best to read the original work of these people in addition to critiques and commentaries of their work. In other words, before using the latter consult the former.
4. Read as widely as possible.
5. Ensure that you include Social Work Abstracts and the Social Work Encyclopaedia in your search. They are good places to start.
6. Use bibliographies and reference lists to expand your search.
7. When taking notes, always write down the full reference and page numbers in case you should want to return to the original source. Remember always to include page numbers for direct quotations in your text.
8. Cite only research that you find specifically pertinent to your topic; be selective. Avoid referring to sections of articles or texts that are not related to your study. There is usually more information than you need.
9. Create a table in which you list the topic you are studying, the authors you have consulted, the main theme of the paper/article and whether it is a research or review article. Develop a system for rating its importance to your study.
10. Discuss and evaluate/critique the literature you have selected.
11. Identify controversial issues or differences between the literature and your study
12. Write the literature review in the past tense (reporting style).
13. Refer to published studies for examples of literature reviews.
14. Do not rely exclusively on computer databases or the Internet as these are still not reliable sources for social work literature.

There are many ways to conduct literature reviews. The following questions serve as an additional guide you may like to follow:
1. What is known about my subject? How much has been written by social workers about this area? How much is social work informed by writing from other disciplines or professions about the area?
2. Is the literature descriptive or research-based?
3. Have there been any systematic reviews of the literature in this area?
4. What is the history of the development of knowledge about my subject?
5. Is there a consensus on relevant issues or is there significant debate on issues and, if so, what are the various positions?
6. Are there any gaps in knowledge of my subject? Which openings for research have other researchers identified? How will my planned project interface with identified gaps?
7. What is the most fruitful direction I can see for my study as a result of my literature review? What directions are indicated by the work of other researchers and writers?

Assignment 1 should minimally include the following:
1. Introduction to the topic
2. A table of all the literature consulted to date with information on author, date, the main theme of the article, and relevance to topic. Students should categorise the article as to whether it is a systematic literature review, research paper, general discussion of the topic, practice-based, commentary or opinion piece.
3. The methodology employed in conducting the literature search
4. Discussion of the themes, issues and debates emerging from this literature.
5. Thoughts as to how the topic might be researched.
6. An accurately referenced list of all literature read.

**Due Date:** Friday 31 August 2007 – 5.00pm (week 7)
**Length:** 2,000 words
**Value:** 50%

**Assessment Criteria**
1. Comprehensive research of literature on chosen topic area (at least 15 articles located) and capacity to locate relevant material from the literature.
2. Evidence that the student is competent in conducting a literature review through explicit outline of methodology of review and summary table categorising relevant literature (not included in word count).
3. Demonstrated understanding of the format of a literature review.
4. Strong introduction which captures the attention of the reader.
5. Critical analysis of the literature.
6. Well written paper with issues, debates and themes clearly presented.
7. Accurate referencing.

**Assignment 2: Research proposal/ethics application**
Students will write a research proposal addressing the following guidelines:

1. **Project Title**
   - Up to 150 characters

2. **Description of project (with references form your literature review)**
   - Background
   - Aims/hypotheses/questions
   - Potential value and significance of the research

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1 See also http://www.tui.edu/Resources/ResearchHelp/LitReviewLgPg.html
3. Participants
- The participants being sought for this research
- The communities / schools / hospitals / organisations etc from which participants will be sourced.
- How, and by whom, will potential participants be selected, and (a) initially contacted, and (b) recruited?
- How many participants will be recruited and what is the rationale for that number?
- List the inclusion and exclusion criteria
- What is required of participants?
- What, if any, benefits might there be from the research for participants or others?
- Will participants receive any reimbursements / payments / rewards for participating in the research?
- Will participants be proficient in the English language?

4. Research procedures/techniques
- Observation, interview, focus groups etc.
- How will research be recorded/documented?

5. Analysis
- How the information you receive will be analysed/interpreted
- What specific approaches or techniques (statistical or qualitative) will be employed

6. Informed consent
- Any existing consent that covers this research
- The procedure to be used to ensure free and voluntary consent
- The consent method to be used, eg. written, recorded, implied

7. Communication of results/reporting
- How the results will be reported/disseminated
- The provision of results to participants
- Any planned debriefing of participants

8. Storage, access and disposal of data
- What form the research data will be stored to ensure its security and confidentiality
- Where it will be stored
- If, when and how the data will be destroyed (note 5 year minimum retention period)
- How will identifying information be managed?

9. Duration of data collection / human research
- What is the anticipated duration of the data collection/human research phase of the project?

10. Safety implications
- Does the proposed research involve fieldwork / off-site activity? How will this be managed to ensure participant and researcher safety?

11. Attachments
- Participant information statement
- Participant consent form
- All recruitment material eg. advertisements, posters
- Surveys/questionnaires
- Focus group/interview schedule(s)

**Due Date:** Friday 2 November 2007 – 5.00pm (week 14)

**Length:** 3,000 words

**Value:** 50%

**Assessment Criteria**
- Ethics proposal follows the recommended structure, is well written, conceptually clear, with accurate referencing.
- Literature review is appropriately integrated into the ethics application.
- Methodology is appropriate to the study topic and questions and clearly incorporates consideration of all relevant aspects including research design, research questions, sampling, data collection and data analysis methods, and ethical issues.
- Ethical issues are clearly identified as well as ways in which ethical concerns will be addressed.
- Data collection instruments – survey questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group outlines – are included as appendices.


**National statement on ethical conduct in research involving humans**

**University of Newcastle web links**

**Human Ethics home page**

**Application forms and guidelines available at**

**Information statements and consent forms**

**Sample Statement**

**Sample Consent form**