SWRK3005 Social Work Research
Semester 2, 2009

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Debbie Plath
Room: W228
Ph: 49215765
Fax: 49216933
Email: Debbie.Plath@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Thursdays 11.00 – 1.00

Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods: Case Study
Experience Based Learning
Self Directed Learning
Student Projects
Workshops

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 semester

Learning Materials/Texts
All students are expected to obtain a copy of the course text:
Copies of the text are available from the campus bookshop.
Some additional readings will be handed out in class.

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

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 2 - 2009

CTS Download Date: 13 July, 2009
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:

- Understand how social workers make use of research to inform practice
- 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.
- Gain practical skills in gathering and analysing research data.
- Develop competence in identifying and appropriately responding to ethical issues encountered in social work research.
- Be able to critically review the benefits and shortfalls of published research.
- 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.

Assessment Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>Written assignment: Research Proposal - 2000 words, 50% Due: Monday 12th October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>Written assignment: Research Report - 3000 words, 50% Due: 10.00am Friday 6th November in class OR by Thursday 5th to a Hub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>There are ungraded individual &amp; group assessment tasks in this course (satisfactory/unsatisfactory). Students must successfully complete all of these assessment tasks to pass the course. These tasks are undertaken in class time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumed Knowledge
Completion of all 2nd year and semester 1 3rd year SWRK courses in the Bachelor of Social Work program.

Newcastle City Precinct Timetable
SWRK3005
SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 – 2009
Workshops Friday 10:00 – 13:00 UNH419 Weeks 1-13

Mandatory Program Component
This course is a mandatory program component in the Bachelor of Social Work and must be passed in order to progress to 4000 level SWRK courses. Refer - [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000647.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000647.html) (section 2).

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. Refer - [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000648.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000648.html)

Group Work, Peer and/or Self-Assessment

All group assessment tasks in this course are graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Groups that do not obtain a satisfactory result will be required to submit additional work as directed by the course coordinator.

The ability to work effectively in small groups and teams is an important aspect of professional social work practice. Small group assessment tasks are thus a fundamental component of your learning throughout the Bachelor of Social Work program.
Class time will be set aside for small groups to work on the allocated group tasks. Groups may, however, need to organise additional group meeting times outside of class times. A group discussion board will also be established for each small group on the online Blackboard site.

Groups are expected to work cooperatively in deciding how to approach each task and how work will be distributed and managed between group members. Some time will be spent in the first group meeting discussing group expectations and negotiating an agreement on how the group can work effectively together. Group members are to take responsibility for developing strategies for managing group processes and addressing any conflict that may arise in the group. The course coordinator (Debbie Plath Room: W228) will be available as a resource to groups during the group meetings scheduled in class times and is also available during consultation times (as listed above) to discuss any concerns in relation to the content or processes entailed in the group task.

Details on the requirements for each group task and the criteria against which tasks will be assessed are provided in the course outline.

**Grading of Group Tasks**

All group assessment tasks are graded as **satisfactory or unsatisfactory**, based on the assessment criteria listed above. Written feedback is given in line with the stated assessment criteria for the task. All group members will obtain the same result, unless a case is made by group members, to the course coordinator, to exclude one or more group members from the final result. Such cases will be reviewed by the course coordinator in consultation with the Bachelor of Social Work Program Convenor. Groups or individuals with an unsatisfactory grade will be required to submit additional work to a satisfactory standard.

**Studentmail and Blackboard**: Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://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.

**Important Additional Information**

Further course details are available on your course Blackboard site.
Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

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**IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY INFORMATION**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge, truth and ethical practices are fundamental to the business of the University. These principles are at the core of all academic endeavour in teaching, learning and research. Dishonest practices contravene academic values, compromise the integrity of research and devalue the quality of learning. To preserve the quality of learning for the individual and others, the University may impose severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity. There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:

**Academic fraud** is a form of academic dishonesty that involves making a false representation to gain an unjust advantage. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it can include:

- falsification of data;
- using a substitute person to undertake, in full or part, an examination or other assessment item;
- reusing one's own work, or part thereof, that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission);
- making contact or colluding with another person, contrary to instructions, during an examination or other assessment item;
- bringing material or device(s) into an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item; and
f) making use of computer software or other material and device(s) during an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item.

g) contract cheating or having another writer compete for tender to produce an essay or assignment and then submitting the work as one's own.

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

a) copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;

b) using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment;

c) collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

Turnitin is an electronic text matching system. During 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 text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).

· Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

RE-MARKS AND MODERATIONS
Students can access the University's policy at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html

MARKS AND GRADES RELEASED DURING TERM
All marks and grades released during term are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations items must be submitted by the due date in the Course Outline unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension. Unapproved late submissions will be penalised in line with the University policy.

Requests for Extensions of Time must be lodged no later than the due date of the item. This applies to students:

· applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or

· 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.

Students must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, as outlined in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

· Special Consideration Requests must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.

· Rescheduling Exam requests must be received no later than 10 working days prior the first date of the examination period.

Late applications may not be accepted. Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak firstly to their Program Officer.
STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

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 contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, 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 on confidentiality and documentation visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability.

CHANGING YOUR ENROLMENT

Students enrolled after the census dates listed in the link below are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/fees/censusdates.html

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

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student.

To check or change your enrolment online go to myHub: https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

STUDENT INFORMATION & CONTACTS

Various services are offered by the Student Support Unit:
www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia. Student Hubs are located at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Callaghan Campus</td>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Precinct</td>
<td>City Hub &amp; Information Common, University House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast Campus</td>
<td>Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria</td>
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</table>

OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Websites</th>
<th>General enquiries</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/</a></td>
<td>Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/</a></td>
<td>Ourimbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4348 4030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html">www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html</a></td>
<td>The Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fax: 02 4921 7151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au">resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
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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 Assessment Item Coversheet**: All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet available at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/)
- **By arrangement with the relevant lecturer, assignments may be submitted at any Student Hub located at**:  
  - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
  - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
  - Ground Floor, University House, City
  - Opposite Café Central, Ourimbah
- **Date-stamping assignments**: All students must date-stamp their own assignments using the machine provided at each Student Hub. If mailing an assignment, this should be address to the relevant School. Mailed assignments are accepted from the date posted, confirmed by a Post Office date-stamp; they are also date-stamped upon receipt by Schools.
- **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.
- **Keep a copy of all assignments**: 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 electronic and hard copy formats.

**Online copy submission to Turnitin**

In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of graded written assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website available @ [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

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.

For information on the University policy on plagiarism, please see above and refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link - [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000608.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000608.html)

**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. Assignment items submitted more than **ten days** after the due date will be awarded **zero marks**.


**Special Circumstances**

Students wishing to apply for Special Circumstances or Extension of Time should apply online. Refer - ‘Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items - Procedure 000641’ available @ [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html)
Assignment Re-submission
Graded assignments may not be resubmitted in this course. Students are, however, always welcome to contact their Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

Re-marks & Moderations
A student may request a re-mark of an assessment item before the final result have been posted in the course to which the assessment item contributes. If a final result in the course has been posted, the student must apply under ‘Procedures for Appeal Against a Final Result’ (Refer - http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/).

Students concerned at the mark given for an assessment item should first discuss the matter with the Course Coordinator. If subsequently requesting a re-mark, students should be aware that as a result of a re-mark the original mark may be increased or reduced. The case for a re-mark should be outlined in writing and submitted to the Course Coordinator, who determines whether a re-mark should be granted, taking into consideration all of the following:

1. whether the student had discussed the matter with the Course Coordinator
2. the case put forward by the student for a re-mark
3. the weighting of the assessment item and its potential impact on the student’s final mark or grade
4. the time required to undertake the re-mark
5. the number of original markers, that is,
   a) whether there was a single marker, or
   b) if there was more than one marker whether there was agreement or disagreement on the marks awarded.

A re-mark may also be initiated at the request of the Course Coordinator, the Head of School, the School Assessment Committee, the Faculty Progress and Appeals Committee or the Pro Vice-Chancellor. Re-marks may be undertaken by:

1. the original marker; or
2. an alternate internal marker; or
3. an alternate external marker (usually as a consequence of a grievance procedure).

Moderation may be applied when there is a major discrepancy (or perceived discrepancy) between:

1. the content of the course as against the content or nature of the assessment item(s)
2. the content or nature of the assessment item(s) as against those set out in the Course Outline
3. the marks given by a particular examiner and those given by another in the same course
4. the results in a particular course and the results in other courses undertaken by the same students.

For further detail on this University policy refer - ‘Re-marks and Moderations - Procedure 000769’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html

Return of Assignments
Students can collect assignments from a nominated Student Hub during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hub to go to and the earliest date that 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 Harvard in-text referencing system (similar to the APA system) 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
Student Representatives

Student Representatives are a major channel of communication between students and the School. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on School websites.

Refer - ‘Information for Student Representatives on Committees’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/committees/student_reps/index.html

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 is available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/currentstudents/index.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Fail (FF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 64%</td>
<td>Pass (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65% to 74%</td>
<td>Credit (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% to 84%</td>
<td>Distinction (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85% upwards</td>
<td>High Distinction (HD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading guide:

- **Fail (FF)**: 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.

- **Pass (P)**: 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.

- **Credit (C)**: 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.

- **Distinction (D)**: 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.

- **High Distinction (HD)**: 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.

This course outline will not be altered after the second week of the term except under extenuating circumstances with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of the change.
SECTION B: COURSE DETAIL

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 reporting on a research study and in writing a research proposal. A research report and research proposal will be completed by all students as the assessment tasks in the course. Components of a mock research study will be conducted as class activities and reported in the assessed research report task. Cross-cultural social work practice is the topic area for the class research tasks.

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.

Honours
Students may be admitted to the BSW honours stream at the end of 3rd year. To be accepted to honours students require a GPA of 5.5 or above and a distinction grade in SWRK3005. For students within the honours stream in the Bachelor of Social Work program, the successful completion of SWRK3005 will equip them with the knowledge and skills required to conduct an individual piece of research at fourth year level. For those students anticipating doing honours, the research proposal assessment task may be the basis for the individual research project supervised in the 4th year of the program.

Semester Overview: SWRK3005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Fridays 10.00-1.00: UNH 4-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | 31 July  | Introduction to social work research  
The role of research in social work                                                      |
| 2    | 7 Aug    | Trigger for class research tasks: “An African Experience”  
Students to attend session at the Northern Settlement Services Centre – 8 Chaucer St. Hamilton (behind Simons Carpets). Starts 11.00am sharp - please arrive by 10.50am. |
| 3    | 14 Aug   | Developing a research topic / question  
Conducting a literature review                                                              |
| 4    | 21 Aug   | Designing a research project  
Writing a research proposal                                                                   |
| 5    | 28 Aug   | Designing and conducting surveys – case examples from practice (guest presenters)               |
| 6    | 4 Sept   | Planning and conducting a focus group  
Ethical issues in social work research  
**Individual ungraded task – Literature review postings on Blackboard: Due Friday 4th Sept**  |
| 7    | 11 Sept  | Focus group data gathering – social workers engaged in cross-cultural practice  
Analysing qualitative data                                                                 |
| 8    | 18 Sept  | Research into indigenous and cross-cultural social work – case examples from practice (guest presenters) |
| 9    | 25 Sept  | **Individual ungraded task: In class quiz – research methods, concepts and terminology**  
Types of social work research – experimental designs  
Critical appraisal of research                                                              |
|------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10   | 16 Oct   | **Graded Written task 1- Research Proposal: Due Monday 12th October**  
Analysing quantitative data  
Presenting research findings – Writing a research report                                      |
| 11   | 23 Oct   | Using research to inform social work practice – Critically reflective & evidence based practice |
| 12   | 30 Oct   | **Group ungraded assessment task – presentation on questionnaire design: In class**  
Honours research presentation & information                                                     |
| 13   | 6 Nov    | Critical issues & debates in social work research  
Review & closure  
**Graded Written task 1- Research Report: Due 10.00am Friday 6th November** (Hand in at start of class)  
OR to Student Hub by Thursday 5th November.                                                  |
ASSESSMENT TASKS

Two ungraded assessment tasks and the individual research report task for this course are all components of a mock class research project. The topic of the research relates to cross-cultural social work practice, but the specifics of the “research project” will be negotiated as a group. Findings generated from the research exercises will be presented in assignments but these are not intended as publishable research findings.

Ungraded Assessment Tasks

A satisfactory standard is required in these tasks in order to pass the course

1. Individual task – critical review of literature

Due: Friday 4th September
Length: Each of the 2 reviews is to be approximately 250 words.

Each student is required to participate in the literature review component of the research project by locating and reviewing two items of literature that offer some background information on the topic of the research project, which is related to cross-cultural social work practice.

Reviews are to be posted on the appropriate discussion board on the course Blackboard site. Each review should cover the following:
- Main arguments or findings
- Strengths and limitations
- Relevance to the class research project

An electronic version of the item should be attached to the posting OR a hard copy provided to course coordinator for access by other students.

As duplication of items reviewed by other students is not allowed, it is suggested that you locate and review several items and post your reviews as early as possible.

Assessment criteria:
- Ability to synthesise information succinctly
- Clarity of expression
- Demonstrated critical appraisal skills
- Provision of full reference details

2. In class quiz – research methods, concepts and terminology

Date of Quiz: Friday 25th September – in class.

This in-class quiz is designed to ensure that students have an understanding of basic social research methods content, concepts and terminology. The content covered in the quiz is contained in the course text. Students will have the opportunity to correct and resubmit papers until all items have been answered correctly.

3. Group task – Design a survey questionnaire

Due: Friday 30th October (in class)

Small groups will be formed to design a survey questionnaire for the mock research project. Some class times will be set aside to work on this task.

Each group will give a 15 minute presentation to the class outlining:
- The purpose of their questionnaire (including how it will gather data to address the research question and research aim/s)
- The process involved in designing the questionnaire
- The content & structure of the questionnaire (show copy on overhead or powerpoint)
- Sampling method & how participants will be recruited / engaged
- Ethical issues and how these will be managed
- How the survey will be carried out
- The nature of data that will be generated and how this will be analysed and presented
- Strengths and limitations of the questionnaire

Groups are required to submit one hard copy of the survey questionnaire.
Assessment criteria:

- Demonstrated understanding of techniques and processes involved in questionnaire design
- Knowledge of sampling and participant engagement
- Awareness of and ability to manage ethical, practical and interpersonal issues in survey administration
- Ability to design a data collection instrument that appropriately addresses a research question / aim.

Graded Individual Assessment Tasks

1. Research Proposal

Length: 2000 words
Weighting: 50%
Due: Monday 12th October

Students are to write a research proposal for a research project to investigate any social work topic of your choice. You are required to design your own research project. The research proposal should address the following guidelines (based on Alston & Bowles 2003: 306-312):

- Research project title
- Background (incorporating literature review)
- Aims and significance of the proposed study
- Expected outcomes / implications of your proposed research for social work practice
- Research plan: Methodology
  - Sampling
  - Data collection techniques
  - Data analysis
  - Rationale for choice of method
  - Limitations
  - Timetable
- Ethical considerations
- Administration of the research, resource requirements and budget

Assessment Criteria
1. Well structured, fluently written, conceptually clear, with accurate referencing.
2. Literature review is well researched, synthesised and appropriately integrated into the research proposal.
3. Methodology is appropriate to the research aims and demonstrates an understanding of all relevant aspects including sampling, data collection and data analysis methods.
4. Ethical issues are clearly identified as well as ways in which ethical concerns will be addressed.
5. Research process is realistically considered within organisational and social context.
6. Connections are made between research and social work practice.

2. Research Report

Length: 3000 words
Weighting: 50%
Due: 10.00am on Friday 6th November (submit at the start of class)

This task requires that you write a report on the focus group component of the class research project. You are expected to draw on the literature reviews conducted by fellow students and the data gathered from the focus group run in class as well as your own reading, reflection and data analysis in writing the research report. A digital copy of the audio recording of the focus group will be made available. It is expected that you fully transcribe the focus group prior to analysing themes. The report should cover the following:

- Background and significance of the research, with reference to relevant literature
- Research question and aims
- Explanation of focus group method – rationale, strengths, limitations (with reference to literature on research methods).
- Description of sampling and data collection techniques (focus group questions may be attached in appendix)
- Ethical issues and how adequately these were addressed
- Description of data recording and analysis process
• Summary of themes (with quotes to illustrate) and interpretation of findings from the focus group data
• Implications for practice
• Implications for future research (what should be the next steps in the research to build on these focus group findings?).

Assessment criteria
1. Demonstrated understanding of the components and purpose of a research report.
2. Well focused, relevant and accurately referenced background literature.
3. Clear, succinct and accurate description of research methods.
4. Ability to appraise the strengths and limitations of research methods.
5. Provision of a rationale for the choice of methodology that is informed by relevant research literature.
6. An accurate presentation of findings, discussed in the context of research aims methods and background literature.
7. Discussion of the research within the wider context of ethics and practice implications.